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**CEDARS, SAINTS AND SINNERS
IN SYRIA**



Photo by]

Room in the 'Azem Palace, Damascus.

[French Institute.

[Frontispiece.

CEDARS, SAINTS AND SINNERS IN SYRIA

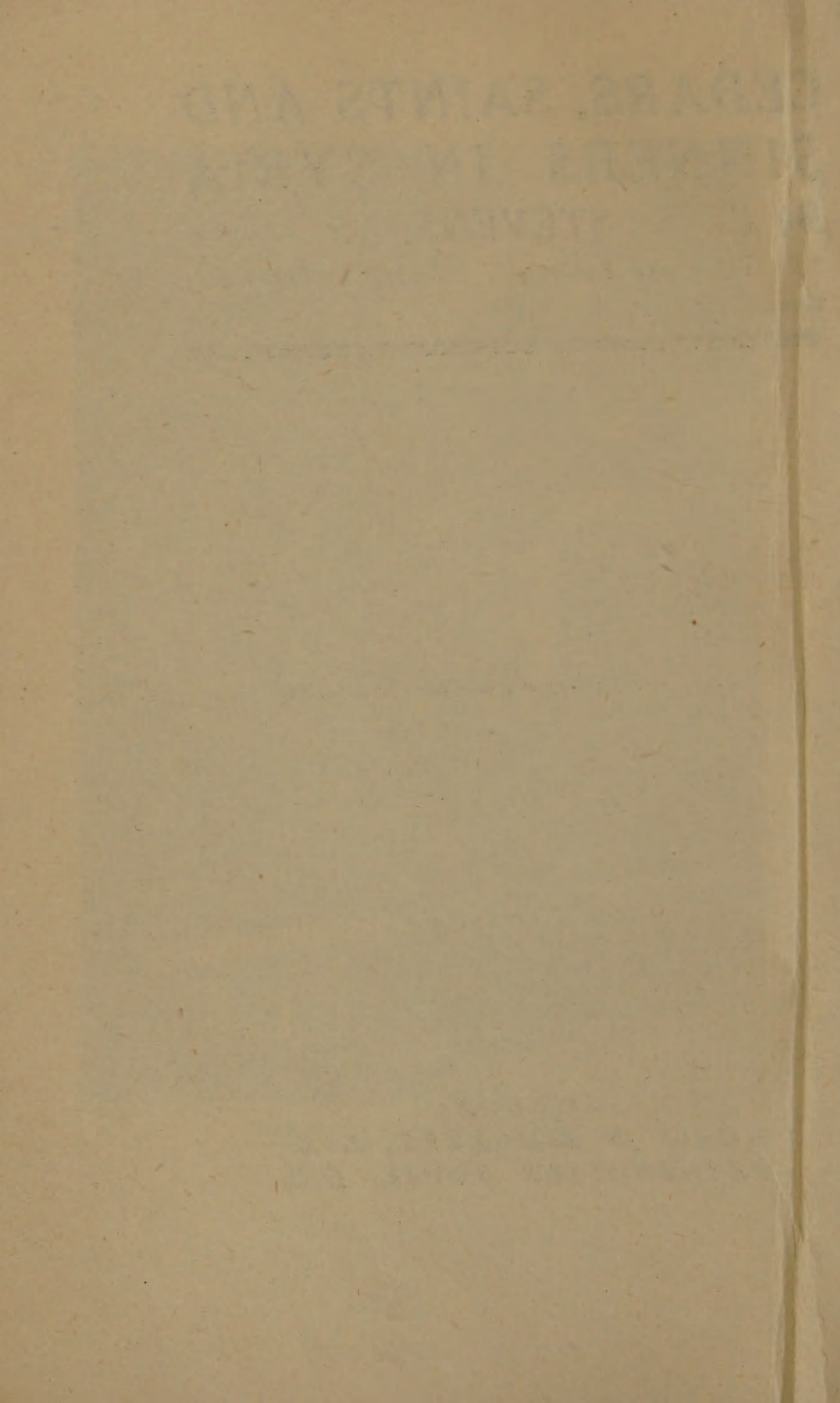
By E. S. STEVENS :: *Author of*

*"By Tigris and Euphrates," "Sophy," "The Losing
Game," etc.*

WITH A FRONTISPIECE AND 74 OTHER ILLUSTRATIONS

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PREFACE

THIS book is the outcome of some months during the past year in Syria. It was not my first visit to Syria, nor, I hope, will it be my last. But as this time I had the advantage of being accompanied by the Chef du Service Archéologique in Syria, Monsieur Lécnece Brossé, whose specialised knowledge and long acquaintance with Syria were put most liberally at my service, my stay has resulted in a book. To Monsieur Brossé I owe the sincerest thanks; also to the French authorities in Syria for their thoughtfulness in affording facilities without which I could not have seen much that I did see. Their help was the more appreciated by me because at the moment they were seriously hampered by the Druze rebellion, owing to which much that had been on my programme had to be cancelled.

The articles thus written, some of which appeared in the *Times* and other newspapers, and appear here with their kind permission, are now collected into a book which I trust may persuade people that Syria, and particularly the Lebanon, is both accessible and safe, even during such disturbed times as the present. It is usually visited in winter. I have tried to point out that summer is an equally good season.

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I have written nothing of Damascus and Baalbec here, nor of Aleppo, Homs or Hama, so that the book in no sense covers the whole of Syria. It is merely a collection of articles written during one summer and during one visit, and, as such, it may have its uses.

While the book was being written, the tragic news came in that Druze insurgents had all but destroyed the gem of Damascus, the beautiful 'Azem Palace, converted by the French Government into an institute for the study of archæology and Moslem art, under the directorship of Monsieur Eustache de Lorey. This eighteenth-century palace, with its marbles, its fountains, its ceilings painted like missals, its cool courts, and its down-fluttering pigeons, was less an edifice than a dream—a dream of Oriental fantasy come true. Close by, the muezzins called the faithful from the great mosque of the Ommeyads ; up to its doors surged the trafficking, leisurely crowds of the suqs. Here was housed a museum : treasures found during recent excavations or unearthed from hiding-places of centuries, fragile glass of rainbow hues, specimens of ceramic art, ancient pottery, cases of coins, bric-à-brac of all ages from Hittite times to the nearer centuries of Islam's greatness. In this setting an effort was made to revive old industries, old arts and ancient crafts.

Here, one evening two years ago, I was bidden to an Arabian Night's entertainment, in a room in which the octagonal marble fountain had been strewn with roses and the walls hung with rare old carpets. While our host offered us Damascus sweetmeats, we watched

dancers dressed in the old costumes and listened to Arab songs and Arab harmonies on Arab instruments, for Monsieur de Lorey adds to his knowledge of Oriental art a knowledge of Oriental music. Nothing that could mar the picture was present, no trace of modern vulgarity or borrowed Europeanism.

And now the priceless carpets and the other treasures are gone—destroyed, looted or burnt, and of the original palace only a part has escaped. For this reason I have included, with permission, some photographs of the palace as it was, and as it is.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
PREFACE - - - - -	V
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS - - -	xi
I. THE NEW PALMYRA - - -	15
II. LOVERS OF ADONIS: GHINEH AND AFQA	27
III. THE LEBANON AS A SUMMER RESORT -	47
IV. CEDARS OF LEBANON - - -	57
V. SHUWEIR - - - - -	71
VI. SILK IN THE LEBANON - - -	85
VII. HAMMANA, AIN ZAHALTA AND BETEDDIN -	95
VIII. SIDON - - - - -	108
IX. THE HIGHWAY FROM BEYRUT TO TRIPOLI -	114
X. THE HOLY VALLEY (THE VALLEY OF THE QADISHA) - - - - -	138
XI. AND SO TO TRIPOLI - - -	172
XII. CRUSADERS AND CHRISTIANS - - -	188
XIII. SYRIAN MEN AND WOMEN IN DAILY LIFE -	213
XIV. AMERICA IN SYRIA - - -	234
XV. FRANCE AND SYRIA - - -	251
INDEX - - - - -	287

For many of the illustrations in this book I am indebted to the kindness of friends: among them Monsieur Léonce Brossé, Chef de la Service Archéologique in Syria, and Monsieur de Lorey, of the Institut Français at Damascus. My thanks are also due to Messrs. Sarrafian, of Beyrut, for permission to use some of their photographs of Syria.

E. S. STEVENS,
BAGHDAD.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Room in the 'Azem Palace, Damascus	<i>Frontispiece</i>
	FACING PAGE
Street of village in Temple of the Sun, Palmyra -	- 16
Palmyra - - - - -	- 17
Palmyra : Colonnade - - - - -	- 17
Camel-corps at Palmyra - - - - -	- 18
Tribesmen at Palmyra - - - - -	- 19
The Sulphureous Spring at Palmyra - - - - -	- 22
View of Palmyra oasis from the Temple of the Sun	- 23
Sheikh Abdullah of Palmyra - - - - -	- 24
Base of a column, Palmyra - - - - -	- 25
The Adonis Sculpture, Ghineh - - - - -	- 30
The " Table " rock at Feytrun - - - - -	- 30
Rock scored by action of water, Feytrun - - - - -	- 31
All that remains of the sacred grove at Afqa - - - - -	- 31
Rock on the road from Feytrun to Afqa - - - - -	- 36
Grotto at Afqa : the source of the Adonis River	- 36
Cave from which the Adonis springs - - - - -	- 37
View from interior of the Grotto of Afqa - - - - -	- 37
The Valley of the Adonis (Nahr Ibrahim) - - - - -	- 42
View of Amphitheatre of hills at Afqa - - - - -	- 43
Ruins of the Astarte Temple at Afqa - - - - -	- 43
Greco-Roman Temple of Yanuah, near Aqura - - - - -	- 54
Details of architecture : Tower of Emmuch - - - - -	- 55
A Cedar of Lebanon - - - - -	- 64
Dancing the " debka " under the Cedars of Lebanon	- 65
Mount Kaniseh from Shuweir - - - - -	- 74
Druze khalweh, or meeting-house, in the solitudes	- 75

	FACING PAGE
Waterfalls : Ain Zahalta - - -	75
Niches containing votive stones, Cave of Mar Yirius -	92
Mural paintings in apse of Mar Phocas, Amiun - -	92
The Palace of a Prince of the Lebanon, Beteddin -	93
Assyrian panels at Ras el Kelb - - -	93
A beauty of Baruk, Lebanon - - -	102
Street in Sidon - - -	103
On the road to Bsharreh—the Cedars - - -	110
The sea-castle : Sidon - - -	110
Fisher of Sidon - - -	111
Plateau above Astarte Grotto (Asfuriyah) - -	124
Roman bridge, Maamiltein - - -	125
The ancient breakwater at Batrun (Botrys) - -	125
The harbour : Jubeil - - -	128
Crusaders' fortress : Jubeil - - -	129
Sepulchral grotto : Jubeil - - -	130
Church of St. John the Well-Beloved : Amiun - -	130
Batrun (Botrys) : Wall of the Crusaders' castle - -	131
Enfeh : ancient rock-cutting utilized as a castle moat -	132
Chapel of St. Saviour, Batrun - - -	133
Rock chamber at Enfeh - - -	136
Crusaders' Chapel ; Enfeh - - -	137
Woman devotee at Chapel of Saidat ad Durr - -	144
Atshit : Rock Chapel of Mar Antun Bedawi - -	145
Deir as Salib - - -	154
Rock Chapel of Deir as Salib below Atshit - -	155
Mural paintings at Deir as Salib - - -	158
Hasrun : Qadisha Valley - - -	159
The " idol " of Atshit - - -	166
Mental patient from Qozhayya - - -	167
Sepulchral grotto : Hadet - - -	170
Waterfall : Bsharreh - - -	171

List of Illustrations

xiii

	FACING PAGE
Street in Tripoli - - - - -	182
Tripoli : Tower of Lions : South - - - - -	183
Qalat al Husn - - - - -	190
Qalat al Husn - - - - -	191
Doorway, Qalat al Husn - - - - -	200
The Covered Stairway : Qalat al Husn - - - - -	201
Qalat al Husn : Hall of the Knights - - - - -	204
Woman of the Homs district - - - - -	205
Lemonade Vendor : Beyrut - - - - -	216
Beduin Wedding - - - - -	217
Supper-time at Birds' Nest, Sidon - - - - -	240
Armenian orphan-girl weaving a carpet at Ghazir - - - - -	241
Men of Bsharreh firing a salute in honour of the High Commissioner - - - - -	272
Arab horseman : Tripoli - - - - -	273
'Azem Palace, Damascus : the Courtyard - - - - -	282
The 'Azem Palace after the fire of October 20th, 1925 (Druze rebellion) - - - - -	283

Cedars, Saints and Sinners in Syria

CHAPTER I

THE NEW PALMYRA

PALMYRA, city of temples and tombs, whose golden bones lie derelict in the desert, is slowly awaking to a new activity. For centuries her colonnades, beautiful in desolation as they never were in life, have glowed forsaken above the dark green of the oasis, an oasis nourished by an ancient aqueduct which brings clear water from the hills. In the days when that aqueduct was constructed, Palmyra stood on the highway between West and East: through her streets passed caravans bound for Mesopotamia and Persia and the marts of the further Orient, and wealth was poured into the laps of her citizens. Then came the ambition of a beautiful queen and her counsellors, the fatal conflict with Aurelian, the deflection of the desert traffic to other trade routes, the setting of the sun of prosperity and the sudden flight of all that busy Levantine life which had flocked to the flesh-pots. The city-state had risen rapidly, and was a parvenu among the city-states of the ancient world, with all the love of display and lavishness of the *nouveau riche*. But its fall was as rapid as its rise. Except for the Arab tribe which nested squalidly in the shelter of its

Temple of the Sun, Palmyra lay as dead as Babylon.

But of late there has been a stirring among the bones. Twice a week in the spring and autumn, once a week in summer and winter, convoys of cars draw up in the oasis as the mail passes through between Beirut, Damascus, Homs and other Syrian towns. There is a new-built hotel close beside the golden temple of the King's Mother, an hotel with electric light, bathrooms and telephone. The ragged swarms of Palmyrene children, wild and impudent, have learnt the magic word "Bakshish!" unknown in the old days of courtesy, and hurl it at you rudely and insistently. There is an aerodrome in the desert, and the hum of 'planes breaks the silence of the tombs at the foot of the hills. So far has modernity thrust itself, that an aviation officer, lacking better quarters, has taken up his dwelling in one of the tomb-towers. There is a *mustashar*, or adviser, representative of the French Government, a barracks for Algerian troops, and the camel corps—"les méharistes de l'Orient."

The camel corps strikes the least jarring note amongst all this innovation. The Arab camel-riders, most of them Nejdīs and subjects of Ibn Saud, coming in with their dromedaries at sunset from some distant pasturage or expedition, the red and blue tassels of their accoutrements streaming in the wind and their bodies swaying to the movements of their highly-bred beasts, belong to the place as surely as the purple hills which shut out the last rays of the sun-god. These desert-riders are engaged, mount and man, for the sum



Street of village in Temple of the Sun : Palmyra.



Palmyra.



Palmyra : Colonnade.

of 600 francs a month. The dromedary remains the property of its owner, and when he leaves the corps he takes his camel with him. Out of his pay he must feed both himself and his *dellul*, and the splendid condition of men and dromedaries shows that this comparatively small sum is enough. The Nedji is the ideal recruit from the French point of view. He can be suspected of no sympathies with the partisans of the Sherifian family, and he is detached from local politics. By religion he is a Wahabi, but I noticed that on this foreign soil not a few of them smoked cigarettes and quaffed the forbidden *arak*.

When I was at Palmyra, which was at the beginning of the Druze trouble, there were three platoons of méharistes at Palmyra, each consisting of seventy-one men and officered by a French lieutenant and sergeant, while the commanding officer was also the principal military and civil authority of the place. The duties of the corps are multifarious. They act as police, scouts and escort. They skirmish, bring in recalcitrant sheikhs and act as desert intelligence. During the war with the Druzes they have done great service, and have incidentally guarded convoys travelling to and from Mesopotamia so that the route might be held open. Lean, brown, constantly moving, the officers of the méhariste corps lead a Bedouin life, often sleeping in the open with their men, accustomed to the biting cold of the desert wind in winter and to the pitiless heat of the summer sun, inured to hard living and scanty fare. "Do you like the life?"

I asked one of them. "Madame," he said, "I like extremes. Either this—or Paris." These French méhariste officers pride themselves on the carelessness of their attire. Only the captain wears anything resembling a decent uniform, and he goes bare-legged and wears Arab sandals. For the rest, one sees wild beards, bare chests, collarless shirts, and hair almost as unkempt as the Bedouin's. A significant little text hangs on the walls of their mess-room :

"Non, Madame ! les officiers n'ont pas obligatoirement une barbe hirsute et des cheveux mal peignés " —which may be rendered, "No, madam, there is no order compelling officers to wear face-fittings and hair like Struwwelpeter's " ! In the mess-room, too, is displayed the device of the corps, a verse taken from the Quran, "Peace lives in the shadow of the sword."

I went several times to look at the dromedaries feeding after their day's work at long troughs round a courtyard. The slenderly-built, breedy-looking beasts are very different in appearance from the slouching, raw-boned, heavily-formed animals used for caravan work ; in fact, one may say that between the racing dromedary and the baggage camel there is as much difference as between the racehorse and the carthorse. Each dromedary is marked by a number, and many of them branded by tribal wasms.* A dromedary in

* A wasm is the symbol adopted by a tribe to mark its belongings, its cattle, its trees, its wells, and even its women, and is as exclusively its property as the trade mark of a firm. All over Palmyra one sees the wasm of the Aneyzeh, parallel horizontal lines terminated by rings.



Camel-corps at Palmyra.



Tribesmen at Palmyra.

poor condition is given extra rations of barley balls, and in winter, as they are sensitive to cold, all the beasts have additional food. As every child knows, a dromedary has the power of living for many days without food or drink, but such abstentions are bad for it, and too many will eventually kill it. It is better for regular feeding and regular drinking, but after a waterless journey of three days it will drink as much as a hundred litres at a time. There is a long waterless stretch between Palmyra and the Wady Hauran, at the frontier between Mesopotamia and Iraq, and in the summer, at the time when the big caravans pass, there is always a certain mortality amongst the camels. I passed across the desert in July, and in the waterless stretch there were bodies or skeletons of camels all along the way, and we passed, moreover, two camels left to die. They turned their eyes on us as we passed as if in a half-formed hope that we would bring them help, but before we were out of sight they had fixed their hopeless, patient gaze on the horizon, as if awaiting from thence their merciful release. No Bedouin will ever waste powder and shot on a sick camel ; if he falls out or dies, he is left to his fate. When I repassed in October, even the bones had vanished : in this lean and desolate land everything is quickly devoured.

I mounted a white dromedary of the corps with its gay trappings and silver-studded pommels, and went under the guidance of a young méhariste lieutenant and a few of his men to visit some of the outlying ruins of the city, for, to do this on foot in the month of July

is tiring. We visited the Kasr al Arus, the tomb-tower of dead women, which is the best preserved of all the mortuary towers, with its plastered and painted interior, and its bas-relief portraits of dead and gone ladies of Palmyra. It is six stories high, connected by a stairway. The largest chamber is that on the ground floor, with five recesses on one side and four on the other, divided by fluted pilasters, and each providing space for seven corpses, so that this chamber alone held about sixty-three dead. The bodies were sometimes placed in sarcophagi and sometimes embalmed, and the body was placed in the tomb head foremost, feet out. It all looks astonishingly new and florid. The stone roof of this chamber, which has partly fallen, is carved and painted, and decorated by portrait bas-reliefs coloured like life. Above the opening to the stairway there are five bas-reliefs with Palmyrene inscriptions, above the entrance another coloured bust, and on the north wall, in which there are no recesses for bodies, there are two rows of portrait busts with Palmyrene inscriptions, and above them the swathed figure of a corpse—a form of tomb decoration of which the Palmyrenes were fond, since I saw it in several of the towers. The bodies have long ago perished, and though a few dishonoured bones and the dust of human remains still lie about in many of the tombs, they have been scattered and trodden upon by many desecrators. Other similar tomb-towers we visited too, with their crumbling stairways from storey to storey, in which the dead were once packed away neatly like volumes in the shelves of well-kept libraries,

but the pattern did not vary much, though some were better preserved. We crept on hands and knees into the burrow-like opening to the subterranean tomb of the Three Brothers, a family sepulchre in which the walls are painted with mythological subjects and portraits of the dead ; among the latter, most poignant of all, a young mother, holding her child in her arms like a Madonna. They had the Asiatic love of jewellery, these dead ladies, and artist and sculptor both took pains to reproduce ear-rings and necklaces and tiaras. There are pious inscriptions to the one-time gods and goddesses of Palmyra, Yaribol, Malak-Bel, Allath, Azimus and Arsus, and the rest ; there are curses on those who defile " the house of eternity," as they love to call the tomb ; there are genealogies, and, often repeated, there is the word " Hebel ! " (" Alas ! ")—a sigh of despair which is a human note, however conventionally it may have been used.

We visited the sulphureous springs which were famous in the day of Palmyra's prosperity,* and surprised a number of French soldiers at their bathing. Where it issues from the ground there is heavy masonry, and within, a pool going back some distance into the darkness, in which it is a favourite sport with the officers to swim by the light of a candle on a plank. The temperature of the water scarcely varies, and in winter strikes warm to the body, so that it is useful as a bath. Then we climbed up the precipitous and ruined walls of the Arab fifteenth-century stronghold

* Called Ephca.

which dominates the plain from its high eyrie on the hill. From the summit we had a wonderful view of the wide area of the ancient city, a scattered mass of fallen and standing masonry. Beyond the ruins and the little oasis stretched the miles of featureless desert, an ocean of barrenness, a boundless horizon. Behind us was the tawny rampart of hills reaching to Homs on the north-east and Damascus on the south-west ; Palmyra standing between the two ranges like a gateway from the desert to the promised land of milk and honey in the highlands.

It is never too hot in Palmyra. When the summer sun is at its warmest there is always a clean, fresh wind—sometimes laden with sand, it is true, but never the intolerable, suffocating blast of the plains of Mesopotamia. For the dwellers in those plains this is surely a half-way house to which they can come for a few days' respite during the worst of the summer heat. It is but eighteen hours' journey from Baghdad, and there is a rest-house on the way.

The Sheikh of Palmyra, a man who is in himself a parable of East and West, lives close to the massive front of the Temple of the Sun, that at sunset flames orange as the Western sky, and every day he holds court in the little mud room, innocent of chair or table, which is his reception room. Here, to the reflective bubbling of the nargileh, politics past and present are discussed, and coffee is handed round. Here daily, during my stay in Palmyra, came two



The sulphureous spring at Palmyra.



View of Palmyra oasis from the Temple of the Sun.

sheikhs of the Hauran in the Jebel Druze, temporarily exiled from their homes by the French Government for political reasons, and here I found myself welcome as an Englishwoman and friend of those who had been friends of the sheikh. He has a long, long memory and is an old, old man, handsome even yet with his white beard and his keen eyes. It was he who accompanied the Blunts on their voyage to Nejd in search of Arab mares of pure blood. He has memories of many well-known travellers, including that English great lady who, enamoured of the East like Lady Hester Stanhope, adopted its ways as her own, and married a Bedouin at Damascus half a century ago. Local gossip says that in his youth he, too, married out of his race, and took to spouse a wealthy French lady who was travelling in the desert, and that with her he went to France and stayed there for five years. But of this he does not speak. He has long since returned to his own folk and his own ways, and has married many other women. One of his three wives died while I was there, of a galloping consumption. I went to offer my condolences. He took a long whiff from his nargileh, and the water bubbled comfortably. "We must all die," he said philosophically, and changed the distasteful subject.

The most impressive thing in Palmyra is, undoubtedly, the Temple of the Sun, with its large smooth blocks, its vast area, and its towering height. The Palmyrenes did things in the grandiose manner, one might almost say in the American way, and this

temple, like the temples at Baalbec, overawes by its hugeness alone. Within, it has been turned into an Arab village, and mud houses have been built marten-wise into its walls and columns. Mangey camels and donkeys, and squalid, impudent folk thread the narrow ways of this village in a temple, and the naos itself is part of the village mosque, which helps to preserve some of the elaborately sculptured stones from the wind and the weather. For the sand-laden wind is an instrument of destruction which, if steps be not taken to protect them, will eventually lay the golden colonnades low. The constant fretting action of the wind-borne sand is cutting through the columns at the base, and some are all but half eaten through. A little more, and they will fall, and the half of the beauty of Palmyra will be no more. Already the mean and hungry tribes who have made the place a home have done their best to destroy it. They have rifled tombs, and hacked off heads from statues to sell them, and done their work so thoroughly that there is scarcely an undefaced image left. The women who trail out past the colonnades at evening and morning, bearing pitchers on their heads to be filled at the ancient aqueduct, have usually some oddment wrapped up in a corner of their robes to offer the stranger, and will whisper news of some antika for sale in the village, pilfered by some conscienceless vandal who cares not what he destroys. The French have not the money or men to preserve the place or its monuments effectively, more's the pity, and it will continue to suffer and decay.



Sheikh Abdullah of Palmyra.



Base of a column, Palmyra : showing how the constant friction of sand blown against the base of the columns eats away the stone.

It occurs to me that all this while I have never mentioned Zenobia ; that figure of romance with whose

SYRIA



history the story of Palmyra is so inevitably attached ; Zenobia whose eager figure one still seems to see at the head of her desert horsemen or riding along the lines of her famous archers, an Elizabeth of the desert, a blue-stocking, an Amazon, and a coquette. But with the new Palmyra of the aerodrome and automobiles she has nothing in common. If again prosperity returns to her city, if shops are opened—there is one already !—and the tide of commerce and travel flows once again through the little oasis, her ghost will not be troubled. Perhaps to the once-too-plentiful statues of prosperous merchants and caravan-leaders there will succeed, some seventeen centuries after, the signs of patent medicines and notices of cinema programmes. That is, happily, as yet in the distance, and even the customary activity of the place is, at the time of writing, curtailed by the war. But it may come. I incline to imagine that her spirit, if it returns from its Roman exile, will prefer to visit the jewelled ladies of the tomb-tower and the owners of those subterranean tombs whose carven limestone doors still swing on their sockets under the sandy hills. In one such sepulchre, through too daring a spirit of exploration, I came near being entombed myself one day, only extricating myself by piling fragments of sarcophagi one upon the other to reach the upper earth. But had I been forced to remain there until found, I should have consoled myself by the hope that I might see some such vision of a Palmyrene great lady as I sheltered among the bones and clean sand of the forsaken place.

CHAPTER II

LOVERS OF ADONIS : GHINEH AND AFQA

WHEN Adonis the beautiful, symbol of the spring of human life and the spring of the year, was slain by the foul beast which was winter—and death—from his life's blood as it welled on to the earth sprang a scarlet flower, called by his name, promise of a future return and resurrection. In the countries of the Mediterranean, especially Syria and Sicily, this beautiful myth of the slain youth mourned by the goddess of beauty and desire, and of his triumphant return from the gloomy realms of death and sleep, lingered long, until it merged in the course of time into the other story of the resurrection, the story of a tomb-door rolled back in the spring of the year, and of love triumphant over death, which was the Christian version of life victorious. In Syria and Sicily spring leaps into the sunshine of the upper world with a gladness and voluptuousness which we, accustomed to the coy and chilly advance of spring-time in more northern lands, find intoxicatingly bewildering. One week it is still winter, and the cold east wind blows shrewdly ; the next, spring has come, the sap runs like fire, the barren ground is blooming, the asphodels are raising their tall columns against the grey rocks, the lizards are

sunning themselves, the orchards and orange groves are a sea of scented blossom. Spring is here, Adonis has returned, the mountains are knee-deep with wild flowers. It is holiday for all the world. And this feeling of joyousness, of relief, was symbolised in Greece by the myth of Demeter and Persephone, in Babylon by the story of Tammuz, for whom the women wept in the spring, and to-day by the gloom of Passion week and the joy of Easter. Old customs die hard, and when the root-idea is the same—the supremacy of life over death—what matter if a little of Adonis mourning has crept into the Good Friday vigils, a little of the old mad joy of paganism into the Easter festival? In the days when images of Astarte stood in the grottoes where now images of the Virgin are placed, in the time of mourning they laid the dead Adonis on the ground, and surrounded him with flowers, and with pots of wheat grown in the dark. In modern Syria and Sicily, the dead Christ is taken from the cross and laid down amidst flowers and wheat bleached as of old, and when His bier is taken through the streets in the towns of Sicily, as I have seen more than once, the ways are thronged with weeping women. In Syria the old cult holds good, for as the bier is carried round the church, the childless women bend to pass beneath it, in order that they may bear. Sometimes the bier is represented by an embroidered or painted cloth, on which the figure of the dead Christ is represented. But the old ideas of fertility and life connected with spring are still there, and are represented by the child-desiring women and by the wheat.

When the wild beast slew the venturous youth whom Astarte loved, he was ranging the woods of North Lebanon, on Mount Nimrud, on the heights above the Afqa gorge, down which the Nahr Ibrahim, the River Adonis, runs down to the sea at Byblos, coloured, said the old faith, with his blood at certain times of the year. It was at Afqa that the desolate goddess mourned, and at Ghineh that she buried his body, bearing it along the sacred gorge to place it behind the living rock, which she sealed up for ever.

To reach Ghineh, you go up the mountain from the Bay of Juneh, passing through Ghazir and Jedeideh. At the latter there is a fine spring and a coffee-house trellised over with vines. I recommend you to turn aside from your pilgrimage and visit the coffee-house to eat of its grapes, as they are very delicious. It is a favourite resort on account of its seclusion for Moslem ladies ; and on the afternoon that I went thither a number of black-veiled women were spending an afternoon in the arbour. Their face veils were up, and one was a lovely young woman. The pure oval of her face was comely, and her grey eyes set with black lashes were beautiful, but most attractive of all were her smile and her perfect mouth. Her sister was fair, but had not the charm of the other. Forgive the digression, but the journey to Ghineh will be forever associated in my mind with lovely ladies, and their pleasant courtesy when they invited the stranger to join them.

The road, as it winds up towards Kfur, where one leaves the car, becomes increasingly difficult, and even

a Ford finds it necessary to back in making the corners ; but at the beginning of the village one gets out and strikes towards the vineyards, following a small rocky path. There were both blackberries and wild roses on the way, and in spring the place must be golden with genista. The nearer we got to the temple, the sweeter and more plentifully grew the herbs. It was evident from the traces of steps that the way we were following was the old pilgrim road to the shrine, and it is only a matter of ten minutes or more from the road to the temple itself. The word " temple " is misleading, for of the Astarte temple that once stood on the site hardly a trace remains. But what does remain is the tomb of Adonis, if so one may call the sculptured rock we had come to see. It stands in an amphitheatre of vineyards, a shaped grey boulder sculptured on two of its faces. One face is much weather-worn and obliterated ; on the other, which faces due east and is only fully illuminated at sunrise, there is a relief carving which is still in fairly good preservation. The latter has two panels, the first representing the god fighting with a bear—yes, a bear, not a boar ; and the other portraying Astarte, seated, gazing at the scene, and apparently weeping. As to the nature of the animal which killed Adonis there is some difference of opinion. Some say a boar, others a bear, and there is mention of a wolf.*

* Talking of this confusion one day, a traveller in the mountains told me that, after his experiences in native houses, he had no doubt as to the nature of the animal which killed Adonis. It must have been an unusually large bug !



The Adonis Sculpture, Ghineh.



The "table" rock at Feytrun, with Shimun and his pipes in the foreground.



Rock scored by action of water at Feytrun.



All that remains of the sacred grove at Afqa.

Immediately below the sculptured rock, a square opening leads down into a cistern hewn in the rock floor, its well-cut sides visible above the water. The little village boy whom I questioned told us that he had been down into it, and that there were carvings at one end similar to those above, but as neither Renan, who lived close by, at Ghazir, nor any of the numerous archæologists who have visited the place mention such carvings, I am forced to believe that he was drawing on his imagination.

The whole place was overgrown with wild roses and sweet-smelling herbs, more particularly wild thyme. A lady who accompanied us told us of a German professor who had written to her to enquire among the people of the place if there were not near Ghineh some fields of lilies, as these were mentioned by classical authors. For a long time her enquiries had no result, until one day some children came to her and told her of a hill, near by, which in spring-time is covered with scented lilies, known as King Solomon's lilies. They brought her great bunches of the flowers. Can it be that they were named in the days when the Great King came to visit King Hiram in this place, or the coast just beneath it? I should like to have seen one of these lilies. There is a particularly lovely white scented lily which grows wild on the sea-shore all along the coast of Phœnicia, which may be identical, but when I picked it I was unable to discover its folk name.

It was unfortunate that the time of my pilgrimage

to Afqa was not in the spring. I should have liked to see the divine youth's return, not his death. But one cannot always arrange these things, and it was in the fall of the year that I visited the Adonis shrines. At Jubeil, the city of Byblos where for long centuries the cult had its headquarters, there is little which actually speaks of Adonis. That there were temples of Astarte and Adonis in Byblos is of course certain, but there is nothing to indicate that any of the remains of the temples which have survived earthquake and destruction and Christianity were devoted to the cult. Nor can one see by what route the dancers and devotees made their way up from Byblos by the long valley to the course of the Adonis river at Afqa. Now, it is at least two days' journeying up the gorge by mule, and the paths the animals follow are difficult, vertiginous paths which often offer a bare foothold on the face of the cliff. One is forced to believe that when the monoliths of Egyptian granite were transported from the Phœnician harbour, the plan of which it is still possible to trace, up the long, wild gorge, there must have been a road of some kind—a road which has since disappeared, leaving not a wrack behind.

I should have liked to have followed the route taken by those frantic devotees, those Syrian women maddened by grief and fanaticism, those girls ready to sacrifice their maidenhood to the goddess who gave her tragic love to the slain hunter. It is difficult to imagine the hysterical pageants in the calm grandeur of their setting. I had read of precipices, of vast

amphitheatres of rock, of sacred woods, and of deep ravines, but all that I had read failed to give a connected impression. The temple of the Bacchantes, the river that rushed from the cavern that gave it birth, the flagellant pilgrims, the chants of the mourners, these were mere bundles of disconnected pictures which would not weld into one. So I went to see the temple for myself.

We did not follow the pilgrim route, being anxious to go as far as we could by car, but made our jumping-off place Raifun, in the North Lebanon.

The carriage road from the coast is the usual twisting Lebanon highway, with many hairpin curves. Most of these roads were designed by Turkish engineers, and were paid for by the kilometre and the turning, an arrangement which explains their absolute impracticability. Often in order to negotiate an awkward corner the wheels of the car come within an inch of the edge of the road—and face of the hill—and until you get used to it the process is a little unnerving. But, considering the nature of the roads and the happy-go-lucky methods of the Syrian taxi-driver, astonishingly few accidents take place.

A village on the way deserves mention on account of its hand-embroidered brocades and silks, where for a few Syrian pounds one may buy enchanting fabrics. It is called Zuq Mikhail. Just past it, on the hills to the left, the winter residence of the Maronite Patriarch is seen, Bkerkeh ; and after that the big, red-roofed college of the Lazarists at Antura. As the car takes you higher and higher above the coast, the character of the

hillside changes, and leaving the neat villages, vineyards and mulberry gardens, you enter the region of the sweet-smelling pines. A sudden twist brings the gorge of the Dog River into view on the right, and, on the slope of a mountain at another turn, the villages of Bet Shehab and Bikfaya, with Dhuhr ash Shuweir.

The higher the road climbs, the rockier it becomes. There are still olive and oaks, but, for the most, it is the storm-loving pine which clings to the wild rocks of grey limestone, which winter rains and snows have worn into strangely-shaped boulders. In spring the mountain here must be all grey and gold, for the broom grows plentifully everywhere, and the tall spikes of the asphodels stand like brown skeletons above the withered foliage. There is an autumn asphodel, a strange, slender shaft of climbing blossom on a straight silver stem, but it is without foliage, as is the autumn crocus which appears in the latter part of September.

Away to the left appears presently the Armenian monastery of Bzoummar, where, I am told, there are illuminated manuscripts that are worth seeing. Further on the road passes the Convent of Sergius and Bacchus, built on the site of an ancient temple, amidst mulberry orchards. St. Sergius is associated at more than one spot with Bacchus in the Lebanon, but I was not able to discover why. Was there a saint bearing the name of the wine-god, or did the wine-god become a saint? Remembering the cave of Santa Venere—Saint Venus—in Sicily, I should like to believe the latter.

Raifun is set among grey rocks, and is somewhat

shadeless ; indeed, in order to take refuge from the sun, the summer visitors are obliged to seek the shelter of one of the big limestone boulders of monstrous shape. Raifun, on account of its wonderful mountain air, has developed during the past two or three years as a summer resort for the Lebanese of the coast, so that there are a number of newly-built red-tiled houses and several hotels in the place, together with the usual number of open-air coffee-houses. The hotel to which we went was a new one, and had comfortable beds, though it suffered from the usual fault—that all the bedrooms opened off the central hall used as a dining- and-sitting room by every occupant of the house.

This part of the mountain is largely held by the sheikhly family of Khazen, a wealthy Christian family which at one time furnished France with three Consuls for Beyrut in succession. The proprietor of our hotel was a Khazen, and after lunch we rested in the shade of some trees beside the family chapel of Khazen, the bell of which was picturesquely hung in the boughs of an oak. Almost every large Christian family in the Lebanon has its family chapel, in which Mass is said, and a common memorial of the dead among the wealthier classes is to build a chapel for their private use.

We had visits to pay in Raifun, and in the evening walked out to a neighbouring village, from whence the rocky outline of Raifun stood etched against the sunset like the broken teeth of a comb. At dinner the muleteers arrived, and there was the usual bargaining and counter-bargaining before the deal was

completed, but finally it was settled that at six o'clock the next morning four mules should be at the door, saddled with native saddles—no European saddles were procurable. The chief objections to the native saddle are, firstly its width, which forces one to sit with the legs widely apart ; secondly its weight ; and thirdly the fact that it invariably gives the unfortunate beast a sore back, as it is designed without regard to the shape of his back. But the Oriental is accustomed to sit cross-legged, so prefers width of seat, and as for weight and sores, that is merely the mule's trouble, and doesn't concern him.

Accordingly, the next day, a fairly early start was made, our luggage being strapped on to the fourth mule. Our muleteers were two, by name Shimun and Hanna. Shimun was armed with a *majuiiz*, or double reed pipe, and an inexhaustible repertory of mountain songs ; and the whole day our procession moved along either to his music, or his songs and laughter, for he was a merry fellow. He was of a Phœnician cast of countenance beneath his tall felt cap, whereas Hanna, the younger of the two, was purely Greek, with his fine features and curly hair. But Hanna was a spoilt and pettish lad, and continually refused to do what was asked of him—until anger was put into the tone, whereas Shimun was always obliging. Hanna had one amiable quality, however : he loved his mule, which I rode, and fed and caressed it upon every occasion.

About two or three hours' riding from Raifun we passed through the strangest and most fantastic



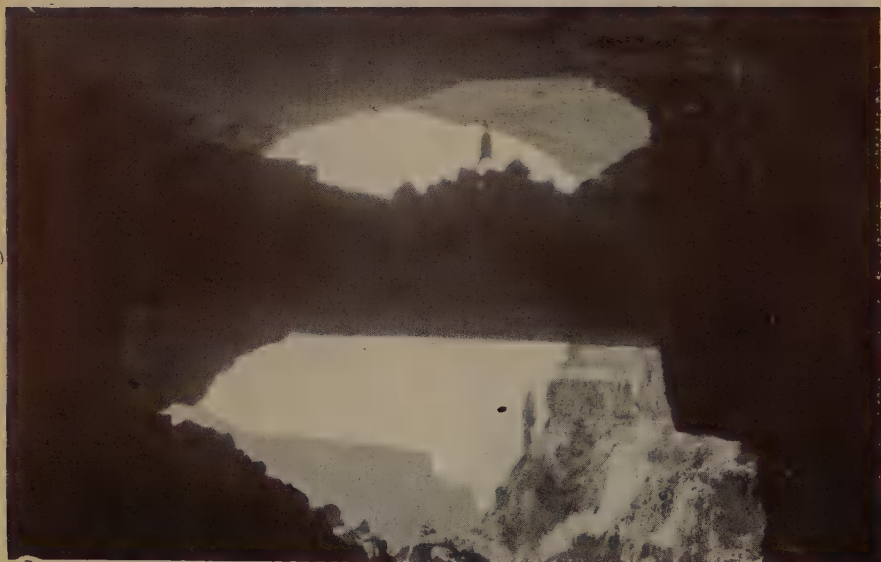
Grotto at Afqa : the source of the Adonis River.



Rock on the road from Feytrun to Afqa.



Cave from which the Adonis springs.



View from interior of the Grotto of Afqa.

valley of rocks that I have ever seen. It is on the Jebel Feytrun, and I am afraid that no description of mine will ever convey to the reader what it meant to ride between these immense and curiously-shaped boulders. Of light grey limestone, they are incredibly riddled and furrowed by water and weather. Sometimes they take on the appearance of a Stonehenge, or a Carnac ; sometimes there are avenues of what one might readily take to be defaced idols, or the uncouth sculptures of Easter Island. Here and there one sees an arch or a bridge which looks as if human hands had shaped it, sometimes boulder is piled on boulder as if giants had been attempting to build a Bethel, and at times we threaded our way between immense blocks which seemed like the houses of a ruined city, with castle walls and turrets showing behind. It is all goblin-like, unreal, and fantastic, especially seen, as we saw it on the return journey, amid the gloom of approaching night, while, the width of several valleys away, Mount Sannin rose like a mountain of rose-coloured fire against the sky.

Boulders similar to these, but on a far smaller scale, I had once seen at Hammam Meskutin, in Algeria. They stand in a haunted valley from which the vapours of boiling springs rise like ghosts from the ground, and the Arabs there say that they are a wedding party turned to stone by the anger of God. A brother fell in love with his sister, and the wedding was in celebration, when the wrath of Allah descended and the guilty pair, together with the guests assembled to bless them, were all turned into stone. They point out

the bridegroom, and the bride, and the impious cadi who gave sanction to the union.

At Feytrun I should have expected some such story about these enchanted-looking rocks, but nothing was forthcoming. Jinns? No jinns are found in treeless, waterless places like this. Jinns like water, I was answered by a shepherd, when we stopped a moment to photograph a boulder known locally as Al Maideh, the Table, on account of its mushroom-like shape.

At last we emerged from the place of rocks, and coming unto—one becomes Biblical involuntarily—Ain al Jurn, where the water gushed out from the hill-side into a rude basin, we let our mules drink. On the way back the next day we paused at this same fountain to make tea, and were buttonholed by an aged man who told us that the church of the village was so old that he was collecting funds for a new one. Questioned, he admitted that the sum hitherto collected amounted only to a few Syrian pounds, about one gold pound and a half in all.

From now on the views became wilder and grander than ever, and the panorama of mountains and valleys more extensive. Also the paths along which the mules made their cautious way were increasingly difficult. Not only had the animals to pick a footing amidst tumbled masses of boulders, but at times had only just hoof-hold on a mountain side, or the edge of a ravine. As for myself, at moments I repeated like a charm, "Mules are sure-footed!" and sure-footed they certainly were. Did one stumble, he recovered

stability in an instant, though how the Arab horse-shoe, which covers the entire bottom of the hoof, holds on rocky surfaces remains a mystery to me.

From Wadi al Atara we were perpetually climbing, sometimes passing stunted pine-trees which scented the wind, sometimes skirting precipices. It was a magnificent stretch of mountains and gorges, across which the purple shadows of clouds drifted, often enfolding us in their wraith-like vapours, chilly and mist-like. To the right rose the rocky flanks of Mount Sannin, very grey and sheer. The rocks through which we passed were rich in fossils, and the delicate shapes of shells and fish were to be seen embedded in the limestone. We passed several springs and tricklets on the mountain side, but for our luncheon-time halt we chose a good spring called Neba al Hadid—Iron Spring. It sends an ice-cold stream coursing along the mountain-side, with a border of much-cropped grass, for the black goats wander everywhere here in summer and autumn on the shadeless rocks. Above us the mountain rose bare and stark to the sky. Once our muleteers professed to see on the heights a wandering wolf, and hailed him with uncouth shouts. Once a large eagle hung above us on strong wings of wide span.

After a short rest, on and up again, this time moving right into grey clouds, which eddied about us, shutting out the valleys below. In the silence and dampness and greyness, we might have been in Scotland. Occasionally we passed a shepherd with his flocks, occasionally the clouds lifted to show us the mountains and valleys spread beneath. The sullen heights above remained

covered by mists. At Neba al Lissa some dour Metawileh folk had their dwelling, and from there, for the first time, in a furtive gleam of sun, we saw the Gorge of the Adonis many feet beneath, itself some two hundred and fifty metres deep in places.

It was drawing near evening, and as yet Afqa itself was not in sight. All the best things in Syria—Palmyra, the Cedars, Afqa, reveal themselves suddenly, after long concealment, like a vision. Palmyra is not visible until one has crossed its rampart of barren hills and is right upon it. The Cedars lie in a hollow and hide from sight. Afqa, too, burst upon us suddenly, after we had climbed a rise dotted over with trees.

It was impressive beyond words. The setting was a wild amphitheatre of grey limestone mountains, rising almost sheer into the sky like a wall, and sparsely sprinkled with trees and bushes. And below them, on the face of the rock, illuminated by the ruddy anger of a stormy sunset, a gash, an open mouth, a blackness—the cavern of Afqa. The sun, piercing through the clouds at last, traversed the deep gorge and smote the red-coloured rocks with its scarlet light, making sudden radiance in the gloom.

“The blood of Adonis!” rose to my lips, as I saw the ensanguined vision from the shadowed hillside, and we pushed our mules onward, anxious to get down into the gorge before nightfall. But the path was too difficult, and we had to scramble down on foot, leaving the mules to follow at their own pace, down loose earth and scattered boulders, down the winding mountain

paths and tiresomely deviating ways. Too late ! By the time we had reached the sacred rock the light had failed, and we were unable even to see the shape of the ruined temple. The sound of rushing waters was everywhere. Regretfully we made the best of our way across the bridge and up a small and slippery path, crossed the torrent on stepping-stones in the dark, and climbed a muddy track towards the lights of a small house at which we had to beg hospitality. It was the house of a well-to-do farmer of the district, who received us in his nightshirt—his wife having already gone off to bed. We had pictured ourselves sleeping on the floor, but our willing host would have none of it. I was shown into a bedroom handsomely furnished with the usual vast bed, wardrobe and washstand, and so tired was I that I begged to be allowed to retire at once. In the flickering light of the candle I noted the bug stains on the bed and unswept floor, but when one is really tired, one's inhibitions take a rest, and I meant to sleep, bugs or no bugs. No words can describe the hospitality and kindness of those good people. They brought hot water, they brought hot milk, they offered me scent and powder, and seeing the broken condition of my comb, produced a silver-backed one which must have been the pride of our hostess's heart.

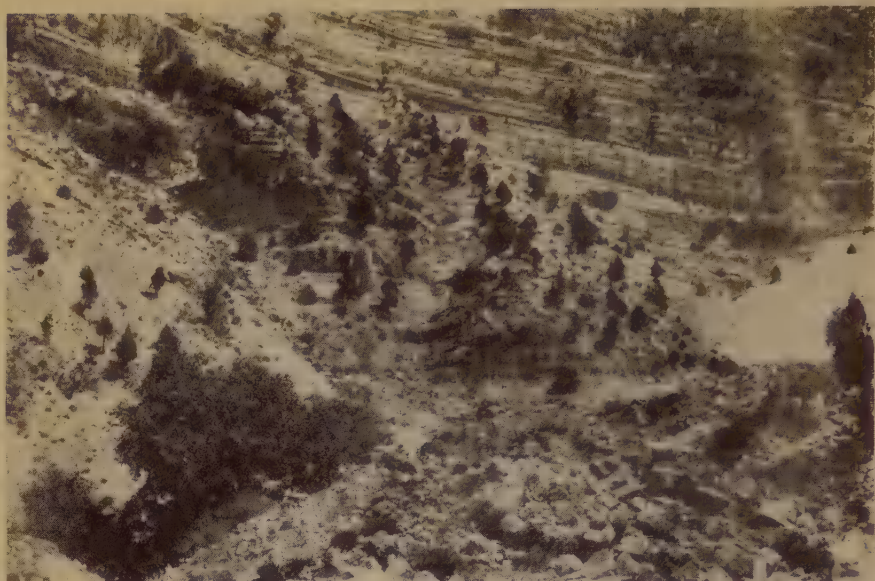
The next morning we rose at daybreak—I had slept in spite of the usual companions—an excellent breakfast was served, of coffee and fresh milk, Arab bread, honey and grapes ; and then, thoroughly fortified, we thanked our generous hosts, stroked the

cats and petted the baby, and set off again for the temple.

The setting was as impressive by daylight as it had been in the light of the stormy sunset. The vast grey amphitheatre, the scattered army of evergreen trees which were once the sacred forest of Afqa, the huge rock, with the wide cavern set in it above the rushing springs, and the falling cascade, all was silent, impressive, and almost religious, in spite of the stone hut set up by the company which intends to use the water-power for electric light. The main spring, which leaps foaming from the mouth of the cavern in winter and spring, was now dry, as were three of the other five streams from which the Adonis is born. The biggest falls in a cascade to the right of the cave-mouth. The stream passes under the bridge, tumbles down another fifty feet, and flows swiftly along a lower level. Even as near its source as this the water is reddened, and it is easy to imagine that, when swollen by melting snows and spring rains, the red cliffs through which it passes must colour the torrent very deeply in times of flood. The grotto is immense, and above it is a clear hundred metres of smooth rock, like a wall. Above that, again, rises some two hundred metres of frowning scarp. The cavern branches off within into several sub-caverns and subterranean passages which no one has penetrated far enough to say how far they extend. With a candle one can explore for a little distance, but, to go on, ropes, picks, and climbing apparatus would be needed. While our muleteers delighted themselves by shouting into its hollow recesses, I



The valley of the Adonis (Nahr Ibrahim).



View of amphitheatre of hills at Afqa, showing ruins of the Astarte temple
in the foreground.



Ruins of the Astarte temple at Afqa.

gazed on the wonderful sunlit gorge which stretched like a vision beyond the shadows of this sheltered and sacred place ; at the villages on the hill-sides, and the rolling clouds on the mountain-tops. Close at hand, walnuts and thuja-trees grow on the barren mountain-side, though sparsely, and in the days of the Adonis cult must have formed a thick grove. As it is, few will survive the axe in another hundred years, and unless the Government will take steps, this sacred grove is doomed. I must confess that I never heard of the thuja-tree until I went to Afqa. It is a dark, cypress-like tree, bearing a purplish fruit, and soars upward like a sombre flame. Its other name, I found, by looking in a dictionary, is the *arbor vitae*, the tree of life. Could it have been these purplish berries which Eve plucked ? It looks dignified and sacred enough, but I wish that it had a more popular name.

The temple of Astarte is in utter ruins. It lies to the south of the source, and is a mere mass of tumbled blocks and columns. Here and there is a capital decorated with acanthus and here and there an entablature, but all is chaos, absolute and complete. Only one wall remains standing, and this will not long survive the thrust of the tree which is rooted in it. One wall fell as recently as 1915, during the earthquake, and the earthquake of 1911 also created great havoc. But the remaining wall is extremely interesting, because, as Monsieur Brossé suggested to me, it may well have stood above the sacred spring into which votaries cast their offerings. There is a double tunnel in its face, the upper and smaller going back for twelve

metres, and the lower and wider for twenty-two metres, thus proving that in former times a spring of considerable size must have poured into the basin beneath. On the wall are the remains of an inscription—*ΠΕΙΛΑΟ*. . . Even now, in spring, there is plenty of water in these tunnels, and Monsieur Brossé is of the opinion that the magic pool, into which the offerings thrown sometimes surged up to the surface through the bubbling of the water, might quite well have been here, though some archaeologists incline to the belief that the sacred pool was Lake Yammuneh, eleven miles away, from which, popular tale relates, the water pours through subterranean ways until it emerges at the Cave of Afqa. But Zozimus is very definite :

“ There is a place called Aphaca half-way on the road between Heliopolis and Byblos, where there is a temple of Venus at Aphaca. Besides that temple there is a certain lake like an artificial fish-pond. Near the temple and its vicinity a fire, resembling a torch or globe, is seen as often as the assemblies (which meet at stated intervals) are held there, and indeed, that fire has been seen as lately as in our own times. Whenever they held the assembly they used to bring gifts to the lake in honour of the goddess—gifts made of gold and silver, as well as webs of linen and cotton and other more costly materials. If it appeared that these gifts had been accepted, the webs were submerged in just the same manner as the heavy articles ; while, if they instead of being accepted, were rejected as worthless you would see, not only the webs floating on the water, but also the things made of gold and silver, and other

materials whose nature it is not to rise to the surface but to sink.

“ Well, the Palmyrenes, when they had assembled with others at the time of the celebration in the year next before that of their ruin, threw into the lake in honour of the goddess gifts, some of which were gold, others of silver, and others textile, and all these gifts sank down into the depths. But next year, at the time of the same celebration, all the offerings were seen floating on the surface, the goddess signifying in this way that which was about to take place.”

The wall at this place is more than five metres thick, and the largest blocks of stone, about five hands' span in length, are roughly chiselled. They may date back to Phœnician times. All over their surfaces, in the crannies, grow ferns of several species, sweet-smelling balm, and primroses. In an inclement winter the site, owing to its height, must be long frost-bound and desolate. Here, where Nature shows herself at once so savage and so magnificent, what better site to mourn Adonis slain by the wilder forces of Nature? Has not the temple itself been rent by the brute force of earthquakes? And when to storm and snow and torrent succeed the spring, the warmth of the sun and the desire of the earth, the return of Adonis must be swift and dramatic. Even on the stony barrenness of the upper rocks the flowers spread their garments of loveliness, and in the valley itself, sheltered from the bitter north winds, the wild flowers grow in profusion, from the yellow primrose in the temple walls to the tall asphodels and the scarlet adonis.

But what interested me more than anything that I saw in the sacred place was the fig-tree that sprouted out of the wall just beside the water-channels. It was hung all over with rags, for this spot is still regarded as sacred by the women of the district, who often come to put money on the slabs or attach scraps of their clothing to the tree as offerings to "the Lady." The tree is a young one, indicating that it is the place and not the tree which is regarded as holy. I should like to have questioned one of these modern devotees of Astarte, but the valley was absolutely deserted except for a woodcutter high up on a slope above us, and not one suppliant approached. The shrine is looked upon askance by the Christian priests, and it is mostly the Metawileh women who resort to it, to beg for children, or husbands, or love. Whether they mean by "the Lady" some Alid saint, like the Sitt Fatma or no, matters not; for Astarte is the real presence, and the gifts are hers, in the place where the blood of her lover runs red to the sea.

CHAPTER III

THE LEBANON AS A SUMMER RESORT

THE Lebanon is already a summer resort for the native inhabitants of Syria, and is rapidly becoming popular with the Egyptians and the people of Palestine. But it is of the Lebanon as a summer resort, not only for British officials in Egypt, Palestine and Iraq, that I am writing, but for such people in England who are weary of wet summers, loathe the idea of a Switzerland crowded with tourists, and are tempted by the thought of cool mountains where the rain never falls from the month of June to the month of October, and of scenery which unites the charm of the Austrian Tyrol with the colour of the Riviera. I am writing for people who like to leave the beaten track ; for those attracted by the old blend of East and West and ancient and modern which is Syria, where ragged Dervish and wearer of green turban jostle Greek priest and Maronite bishop, and the casino the mosque ; where in one valley you will find a ruined temple to the sun or to Astarte, and in another a Crusaders' chapel ; where, in one solitary eyrie you will find a hermit living the life men lived long ago in the Thebaid, and in another a khalweh, or meeting-place of Druze

mountaineers, whose religion has been kept more secret than the mysteries of the Freemasons during centuries of curiosity.

For those with cars, the whole Lebanon is accessible, as there are car-roads everywhere. If they wish to leave the roads and travel by mule, horse, or afoot in places where cars cannot go, they are undertaking no great expense, for the Syrian pound makes an English pound go a long way, and out of Beyrut everything is reckoned in Syrian pounds, except in a few hotels in fashionable places like Aleih and Sofar. For those without cars, there is the taxi, ubiquitous now in the villages of Syria. Nor need the question of language present difficulties. Syrians are polyglots, and even in the most remote hamlets one usually finds one inhabitant at least who has been to America and can speak "English." But with French as a second language, one can get on well, and there is no need of dragoman or guide. It is preferable, of course, to speak Arabic, as without that language one is unable to communicate with the humbler people, on whose lips so much of the charm and legend of the country still lingers, but it is not essential.

The Lebanon offers every variety of climate in summer, from the not overwhelming heat near Beyrut—where there is excellent bathing—to the regions where the snow never melts; for, even in hottest August, patches of snow are to be found in deep crevices on such mountains as Hermon, Sannin, and Kaniseh. At Aleih and Sofar, where there are bands, dancing and bridge, with plenty of tennis, the heat

is that of a pleasant English summer. But I fancy that those who care exclusively for such attractions as dancing and tennis would not come to the Lebanon in search of them ; and there are other places, such as Brummana, Ain Zahalta, Baalbec and Shuweir, which, while catering for Europeans in the way of hotels and tennis courts, have more to offer in the way of beauty, interest and peace. For one thing must be said frankly at the outset ; with few exceptions, very few, there are no hotels which come up to European standards in Syria ; and in any of the much-advertised mountain hotels the presence of Levantines—Egyptians and Syrians—is apt to render the place unattractive for such as like peace and quiet. For neither Syrian nor Egyptian nor Oriental Jew, however Occidental in dress and education, seems to understand that to speak quietly is a courtesy which is owed to other visitors. They all behave as if they had the place to themselves. The handsome, expensively-dressed Levantine matrons, with their numerous offspring, who vary painful progress in high-heeled shoes about the village roads with excursions in taxis to coffee-houses in other mountain resorts, may be charming people to meet, but they are trying to live with. I imagine that, being indolent, they find it easier in their own houses to shout conversation to others than to go to them, and that the habit insensibly grows upon them. Even when they do not shout, the quality of the Levantine voice is peculiarly penetrating. Again, a native has a constitutional inability to close a door. He prefers to

bang it, and will bang it at whatever hour he re-enters his room. And if these idiosyncrasies are perceptible in older people, it may be imagined that the children, full of holiday health and spirits, and rarely corrected by indulgent parents, are somewhat noisier than European children. I am not complaining. It is their country and they have a perfect right to make as much cheerful noise as they wish. But the European is often happier in places where human life is less exuberant and all-pervading.

Many hotels are built on a plan which ensures the maximum of echo and sound. The favourite device of the hotel architect in Syria is to build all bedrooms off the central hall used for eating and loitering, and to leave an open space above each door, so that the visitor may have the full benefit of the performance of stout *patersfamilias* from Beyrut or Alexandria on the out-of-tune piano—"Cavalleria Rusticana" played with one finger to a fancy bass is a favourite—or of the gossip and giggles of dark-eyed maidens whose high, minor voices are raised above the arpeggios and grace-notes of *papa*. It was much the same in ancient times. Athenæus, quoting Posidonius, writes of the Syrians :

"They passed all their time in their . . . public eating rooms, as if they had been their own private houses ; and the greater part of the day they remained in them, filling their bellies with meat and drink, so as even to carry away a good deal to eat at home : and they delighted their ears with the music of a noisy lyre, so that whole cities resounded to such noises."

Moreover, where the Levantine goes, there goes the bed-bug. This curse is all but universal in Syria, and the tourist must be forewarned. For those who are horrified by this statement ("English people have such sensitive skins!" a hotel manager said plaintively to me once when I made complaint), let me add that there are hotels where they are safe from such pests, and they are the hotels least frequented by the people of the country, such as the spotlessly clean little Peak Hotel at Shuweir, which only takes English and Americans, the Hotel Little at Brummana, certain hotels at Aleih, Suq al Gharb and Sofar, and others whose names can be easily learnt in the country when one arrives. Hotel keepers say to me, "How can it be prevented? This is a hot, damp country, and travellers bring the vermin with them." My reply is that it can. Hotel managers in Syria are apt to sit comfortably in their offices smoking nargilehs and discussing politics with their visitors, leaving everything to the casual mercies of the native servants whom they employ. Let the manager see that the rooms are properly cleaned, let him have floors washed with mild disinfectant after the departure of every guest, let him see that bedding is spread in the sun, and, above all, let him eschew wooden beds, wooden furniture, and wooden ceilings. Such wooden furniture as there is should be thickly enamelled, and examined constantly. Hotel servants should never be allowed to use hotel beds, and lastly, the hotel manager should not only give orders for cleanliness, but ensure by personal inspection that they are carried out.

But until the hotel keeper learns his business, to those going at all off the beaten track I counsel taking a light tent and a sleeping-bag, easily stowed into a car or fastened to a mule. With these, one can go anywhere and do anything in peace and comfort; camping places are found everywhere, and food can be obtained anywhere. The food at most of the hotels, though not up to European standards except in Beirut and the largest hotels in the Lebanon, is eatable anywhere, if somewhat Syrian in character. Moreover, if the guest is not accustomed to the over-fat and over-sweet character of Oriental food, he can usually select dishes more to his taste, and the manager will try to suit him. For myself, I find *leban* (curdled milk), eggs, bread, honey and fresh fruit, which are obtainable for the most part in the poorest locanda, more than ample fare, and very health-giving; but to these may be added chicken and vegetables, which can be prepared to suit the visitor if he orders them in advance. All through the summer fruit is plentiful and cheap. I have never eaten such huge and delicious plums as in the Lebanon, and there are, besides, fresh figs (white and black), fresh bananas, apples, pears, peaches, and the best grapes in the world. Mountain honey, if you can get it, is delicious; so is the grape *dibis*, or syrup, a honey-like, healthful addition to bread, whether the unleavened Arab loaf or the usually procurable French roll.

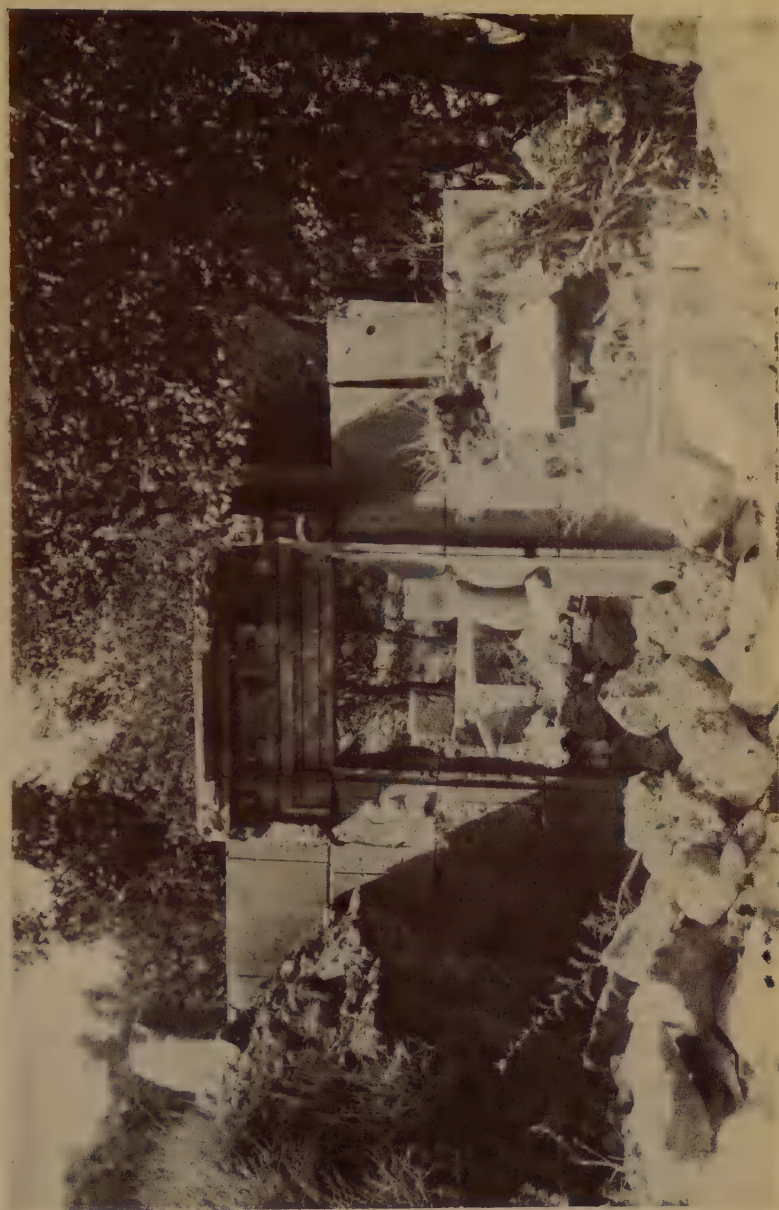
Baths are advertised in many hotels in the Lebanon, though in some cases one finds that they are apparently little used, and that unaccustomed machinery must be

set in motion in order to obtain one. I remember going to a much-advertised hotel in Tripoli, and at six o'clock ordering a bath for half-past nine that evening, having been assured that there was an excellent bath-room. At half-past nine, armed with my towel, I sought it. I found that the bath was so built into a corner of the so-called bathroom that to get at the taps the bather had to scramble down the interior of the bath ; moreover, it was apparently inhabited by happy families of cockroaches. I summoned the attendant, and we made various efforts to obtain hot water from the really beautiful plated taps, but as none was forthcoming, and the cockroaches seemed inclined to dispute possession, I finally retired to the bedroom, where eventually a jug of hot water was brought me. One becomes an adept in bathing in a basin or small tub, and hot water is usually available. Sanitary arrangements, too, leave much to be desired in the Syrian hotel. Even when they are European in character, the flow of water is often fitful and insufficient, and the arrangements uncleanly.

To hardened travellers, of course, the details I have mentioned are negligible, but to tourists and folk accustomed hitherto to European travel they should be mentioned, in case they lead to reviling. If such people are prepared beforehand, they cannot plead that they have been misled, and if they have not been put off by my frank statement of what they would never gather from hotel advertisements and the circulars of travel agencies, and are prepared for a few inconveniences, I think that they will come to

the conclusion that a summer holiday in the Lebanon is worth while in spite of all, and more than worth while. After all, such discomforts are easily alleviated. I am told that a few drops of iodoform sprinkled on a bed will keep away all vermin, and dyspeptics afraid of native food can easily supplement their diet. Moreover, after a week or so travelling in mountain air, I can guarantee that they will eat almost anything and sleep anywhere.

I hope that this book, superficial as it is, will show would-be tourists a little of the intensely varied interest of the Lebanon and of Syria generally, and convince them that to go East in the summer is far from being an unthinkable enterprise. As for those who already live in the Near and Middle East, the drawbacks I have mentioned will not seem serious. To officials living in Egypt and Palestine, the Lebanon has the advantage of being very near, and of being cheap. To dwellers in Iraq it may yet become a hill station, for they have none of their own. The Kurdish hills, which offer a climate as temperate as the Lebanon and scenery almost as magnificent, are difficult of access, and often unsafe because of local disturbances ; moreover, there is no accommodation for visitors. And a visit to Persia costs as much as going to the Lebanon, without offering as much variety and charm. At present the cost of crossing the desert deters many in Iraq who would otherwise send their women and children to the Lebanon for the hottest summer months, but in time, I do not doubt, the various overland transport companies will see their way to



Greco-Roman Temple of Yanuah, near Aqura.



Details of architecture : Tower of Emmueh.

running "summer leave" cars at greatly reduced rates. The present summer return ticket from Iraq costs thirty-five pounds, and that is too much for many people.

For those who need rest and quiet there are the pine-scented slopes of Brummana, and of Ain Zahalta, or the scented loveliness of Shuweir on the mountain-top. There are many people who find it pleasanter to take a furnished house—they are obtainable for the whole summer for as little as thirty pounds—in some place like Suq al Gharb, Bhamdun, Beyt Miri, Shuweir, Muruj, or Raifun. Some like to go from place to place until they find a resting-place which pleases them, and I met a couple who spent a delightful summer walking in the mountains with a donkey to carry the kit. Others I know have taken tents to the Cedars, and lived there for a glorious summer, going off when the fancy moved them for tramps in the Qadisha valley, or ascents up the mountains. The Lebanon offers the entomologist a world of rare butterflies, the archæologist a rich field of interest and discovery, the historian a mine of commentary in ancient building and modern tradition, the student of folklore a living library in the daily practices and beliefs of the people he will meet every day. The botanist will do better to visit the Lebanon in the spring or early summer, for by August the wealth of flowers has vanished, and by the end of September only a few wild flowers recall the glory of May. I really do not know why I have headed this chapter "a summer resort," when I come to think of it. The

Lebanon is lovely, even in winter. There are flowers always on the lower slopes, and some people living in Beyrut tell me that every winter they go to the slopes of the snow-mountains for winter sports, sleighing and ski-ing.

Lastly, as to clothes. Ordinary summer clothes, such as are worn in England, are suitable to the Lebanon, with a warm coat to slip on in the evenings. Shoes should be strong, flat-heeled and with nails in the soles. Except in Beyrut, or in one or two hotels at Aleih or Suq al Gharb, evening dress is not necessary at all. The smaller the wardrobe, the better, and it is possible to get washing done at short notice almost anywhere in the mountains. Laundry is often included in the hotel terms.

If a house is taken, and servants are required, it is as well to remember that the Near East Relief officials in Beyrut are sometimes glad to find summer work for Armenian protégés, or, failing them, application may be made for help to the Bureau de Tourisme, or Cook's office in Beyrut, both institutions being anxious to help travellers in any way they can.

CHAPTER IV

CEDARS OF LEBANON

"So Hiram gave Solomon cedar trees and fir trees according to all his desire . . . and Solomon had . . . fourscore thousand hewers in the mountains."

OF all the mighty cedar forests which once clothed the grey heights of the Lebanon, there survive now but a few huddled groups of trees, such as the cedars above Ain Zahalta, and those above Baruk. But of all these poor survivors of past glory there is one grove known above all others as *Al-Arz—the Cedars—the* tiny forest of some four hundred trees which lies like a small black stain on the bosom of the mountains above the sacred valley of the Qadisha.

These insignificant groves are sole survivors of the fair forests which once spread over the whole Lebanon, and for their disappearance the axe is alone responsible. For centuries and tens of centuries the people of the Lebanon have hacked and sawn, and hewn and felled until, not only the cedar, but the cypress, oak, poplar and pine as well, have dwindled away. Of all these trees, the slowly maturing cedar has most suffered. It furnished Hiram and his Phœnicians with the

sweet-scented timber which they sold to Solomon and the other kings of the earth for their temples and palaces. The Greek settlers used it, and so did the Romans during their occupation, and so have all races, whether of the soil or foreign to it, which have utilised the resources of the Lebanon. It is only a sentiment approaching to religious awe which has preserved these last stragglers of a vanished host.

The Lebanon is the land of lost forests. Here and there in the mountains it is possible to find still *in situ* boundary marks placed by Hadrian and other Roman Emperors, to mark the limits of woods which have long ago become barren wastes. Pine and oak were as ruthlessly sacrificed as the more profitable cedar, and utilised for ship-building and fuel. The iron ore found in the hills was all smelted with wood fuel, and forest after forest was eaten up as the furnaces moved forward. And though the mines are abandoned now, the work of destruction is still going on. The other trees of the Lebanon must inevitably follow the cedars in the course of the next few hundred years. Not only is toll laid upon them for timber, but the Lebanese are entirely dependent upon wood for domestic fuel. Finally, almost equal to the axe as a destructive agent, is the goat, that enemy to small growing things which eats all seedlings that come in its way.

Afforestation there has never been, save near some of the monasteries, and, to judge by the apathy of the Lebanese, there never will be. Not long ago

an energetic French official, horrified at the complacency with which the Lebanese view the disappearance of their trees, got together a large meeting of notables and school children in the Lebanon, in an endeavour to raise public interest in the question. Speeches were made, the children harangued, and many fine and noble protestations of intention to replant the mountain were made. Once more, under the care of the new generation (it was prophesied) would forests wave on Lebanon; for, henceforth, every Lebanese would consider it his patriotic duty to work for afforestation and the protection of trees. To symbolise all these good intentions, a young cedar was planted with all solemnity. A fortnight afterwards a passer-by found it pulled up by the roots and cast aside, and it was never replanted.

There is only one guarded spot—the patch above the Qadisha—Al Arz. A wall has been built around the grove, and it is looked upon as a national treasure, a national security. It is, in fact, the last sacred grove. Time was in Syria when sacred groves were many, and sacred trees still more numerous. There was the sacred forest of Afqa, and the holy grove on Hermon, of which some traces still survive in the sacred trees near Baniyas, trees to which rags are tied by women who come to make vows to the spirits called the Benát Yakúb, said to inhabit them. The cult of the sacred tree dies hard. There are many in the Alawite district; there is the sacred fig tree at the source of the Adonis, the tree at Kubb Elias in Cilicia, and a host of others, on which candles are

burnt and scraps of clothing are secured by way of votive offering.

A story is told of a certain hermit who lived in the Qadisha valley near such a tree. Day by day the scandalised hermit saw people pass on their way to make offerings to the tree and to burn incense to the spirit of the tree. He used to intercept them and remonstrate with them in vain, and at last came to the conclusion that the only way to stop the heathenish practice was to cut the tree down. So he armed himself with an axe and set off. On the way the Evil One met him and asked where he was going. The hermit informed him.

"Why cut down the tree?" asked Satan. "It has done you no harm, and will offend many innocent souls."

"I shall destroy it because it is wrong to offer to trees the worship which should only be offered to the Almighty."

Satan argued with him, and finally leapt on him to prevent his going further. The two wrestled mightily. The fiend was strong, but the hermit, firm in his good purpose, stronger, and the Evil One soon lay vanquished.

"Before you cut the tree," said the prostrate fiend, "I wish to tell you something to your advantage."

"What is that?"

"For each morning that the tree remains standing, you will find five gold pieces under your pillow."

So saying, he escaped, and the saint began to

reflect. After all, it would do no great harm were the tree, which had stood so long, to stand a little longer. He put the axe under his arm, and went back to his cell. The next morning, five gold coins lay beneath his pillow. He did not cut the tree that day. The next morning, more gold pieces lay beneath his pillow. That day, too, he remained in his cell. The same thing happened on the third day. The fourth morning, when he looked beneath his pillow, he found nothing.

"Ah ha!" said he; "the Devil is the Father of Lies! If I find nothing to-morrow, I shall cut down the tree."

The fifth morning he was again disappointed, so he took his axe and set off, vowing vengeance on the Faithless One. On the way, as before, he met Satan. Again they fought, and this time it was the Devil who had the hermit on his back and pleading for mercy.

"Spare my life!" said the hermit, "and I will spare the tree."

The compact was made and the hermit allowed to rise.

"Tell me," said the discomfited holy man. "Why have you overcome me now when I overcame you so easily five days ago?"

"Five days ago," answered the Prince of Darkness, "you were on Another's errand and moved by His zeal. Now you are moved by zeal for gold."

Most people when they go to the Cedars take the

new carriage road from Tripoli. But we preferred to take the old road, which, as it climbs up from Shekka on the coast to Haddat, offers some of the finest and wildest scenery in the Lebanon.* It runs close to the gorge of the Qadisha. Above, far away, towers the highest peak of the Lebanon, Qommat as Sauda, and immediately above, like huge walls erected by Titans, sparsely grown grey precipices shut in the valley, their stern contours softened here and there by terraced vineyards. Ever upward climbs the road, until at last the mountain villages of Bsharreh and Ehden are visible on a distant height, with a black spot staining the mountain behind them. That spot is the Cedars.

Since the triumph of the car in Syria, Bsharreh has become the route to the Cedars, whereas before, ascents were usually made from the rival village of Ehden, or up from Baalbec in three days. Ascents are still made from Ehden, but the road is longer. Perhaps this is another bone to pick with the rival village of Bsharreh; for there is a feud hundreds of years old between the two villages. As short a time ago as just before the war the smouldering enmity flamed into battle, and the young men of Ehden rose up and went to slay the young men of Bsharreh. At present the warfare is confined to taunts exchanged by muleteers, or an occasional fight about a girl.

My advice to those going to the Cedars is, not to stay in either village if possible to avoid it, for the

* See Chapter X

reason that the accommodation—in spite of advertisement—is of a primitive and Oriental kind. Whereas, at the Cedars themselves, clean tents are available, not to mention a new hotel which is being built. And it is possible, in summer, to roll oneself up in a blanket and sleep beneath the trees, in the scented freshness of the wood.

From Bsharreh to the Cedars it is two hours by mule. We secured ours after the usual altercation as to price. For the benefit of others, the hire of a mule for the ascent costs sixty Syrian piastres—little more than half-a-crown—and this includes the services of the muleteer, who leads the way and usually beguiles the road with pipe and song. The long twisting track up the rocky mountain-side is hot and unshaded in summer, and it is as well to start early, or else choose the late afternoon, which is the better plan if one intends to sleep at the Cedars. And what scenery! What visions of ethereal distances, savage cliffs, falling waters, cloud-crowned mountains and stony crags! One forgets that one is often unpleasantly close to the side of a precipice, or that the mule, bedizened with scarlet tassels and blue beads, is picking a painful way up a path that resembles the bed of a mountain torrent rather than a track for beasts and men, and is often scarcely wide enough to allow two laden animals to pass. But the Cedars, like Eastern brides, keep hidden till the very last. They lie in the lap of the mountains, and it is only when one is close upon them, after two hours' uphill toiling, that they reveal themselves. And

then, the first instinct, so insignificant looks the patch of dark green in its mighty setting, is to say, "Is that all?"

Yes, that remnant of a forest, fenced about with a grey stone wall, outside which but a few truants remain, is all. But when one gets closer, one sees that it is a mighty remnant, after all. As one climbs up over the slippery, sweet-scented needles, layer upon layer deep, into the solemn and ancient wood, one realises that it is enough to evoke all that the words "Cedars of Lebanon" imply. They grow close, those trees, a few of which number their years not in hundreds but in tens of hundreds, and within their shade there is the gloom and hush of a holy place. Some of the veterans have attained an immense size, and five men are needed to encircle one aged trunk with their arms. It is reputed to have seen two thousand summers and winters. Who knows? It may have seen the birth of Christianity, the first fearful years of the faith and its triumph; it may have witnessed the decline of Rome, the coming of the Crusader, and the conquest of the Moslem invader. For centuries it has stood sentinel above the Holy Valley, that deep, romantic gorge of the Qadisha which has sheltered anchorite and monk from the time of the first persecution until to-day, that wild and lovely gorge of many ravines, watered by many foaming cascades and mountain torrents. "It was a seedling when Solomon was king," said a Lebanese to me; and while this is something more than the truth, perhaps, yet it is a lineal descendant



A Cedar of Lebanon.



Dancing the "debka" under the cedars of Lebanon.

of the kingly trees of which the Temple was built.

The silence, and the twilight made by the thick branches, and the incense of the sun-warmed, aromatic timber, give the impression that one is in a temple, so that the little Maronite chapel which pious people have built in the centre of the wood seems unnecessary, even irreverent. The chapel bell is hung on the trunk of a cedar tree near by, and once, during the course of the day I spent there, its voice rang out through the wood, calling people to prayer. That, too, is unnecessary—the cedars are their own muezzins. A peasant to whom I was talking in the Qadisha valley a few days after told me that once on a time a goatherd, guarding his black flocks in the Cedars, felt the desire come upon him to pray. To his surprise, he saw a trap-door at his feet which he had never noticed before, and, opening it, and descending some steps, he found himself in a subterranean chapel. It was brightly lit with candles, and at the altar priests were celebrating the mass, while the sound of holy chanting filled the place. Delighted, at the end of the service he left the chapel, and determined to mark the spot so that he should know where to find it again. So, fetching some stones, he placed one upon the other in a pile, close to the door, and at evening returned with his goats, full of the news that he had prayed at a wonderful shrine. His mother and sister would not believe him, but as he was so positive, they went the next day with him to the Cedars to see for themselves. The goatherd led the way confidently to the

spot where, to the best of his remembrance, he had built the cairn, but when he arrived no cairn was to be seen, nor trap-door, neither did he ever discover his chapel again.

Near the Maronite chapel is a fountain where, in summer, Lebanese visitors like to sit at tables and drink the water, or the sweet, heady mountain wine that they have brought with them. At a little distance there is an aged cedar which, some fifty years back, within the memory of man, harboured a saint, a hermit who lived in the tree and subsisted only on offerings of food brought him by passers-by, and on the black, bitter water which collected in a hollow in the trunk. In winter months the snow often lies thick on the branches, and the line of unmelting snow creeps close, and so, when the first flakes fell he descended to the comfortless shelter of a cave in the mountains. For how long this latter-day stylite carried out his penance I do not know, but the tree is still looked on as sanctified, and the water is thought to have healing powers, especially for such as have sore eyes. Another tree is used for the cure of horses. Fodder is placed in a basin-like projection on the trunk, and the sick horse coaxed to eat from it.

Within the wood, too, is a small low building of rough stones, unroofed, which, when spread over with tenting, or a cloak, has for many years given shelter to those overtaken by night at the Cedars. Further up the hill, outside the grove, is the new hotel, still unfinished, but ready to provide food, and excellent food too, if I can judge by the banquet at

which I was the surprised and grateful guest. For a distinguished ecclesiastic from Rome was paying a visit to the Cedars, accompanied by a number of Maronite clergy, who, in their hospitable plan, had included a meal served in the shade of a cedar tree close to the hotel. They very kindly invited me to join them, and I took my place at the long table with the rest. The meal was long. To *burghal* and roast lamb succeeded mincemeat wrapped in vine-leaves, stuffed cucumbers, custards and divers dainties. Beer, wine, and other drinks were followed by champagne, and enthusiasm and friendliness grew as the meal proceeded. The distinguished ecclesiastic—an Eminence—had a slightly unshaven chin owing to his *villegiatura*, and in his black, scarlet and purple looked like a sixteenth century portrait by an Italian artist.

At last the moment arrived when toasts were drunk and speeches were made. The worthy father at the end of the table made an impassioned speech in Arabic, in which he thanked his Eminence for the honour he had done them in coming amongst them that day, and particularly in coming to a spot so bound up with the pride and history of the Maronite church. In this place, their fathers had fought for the faith, a faith to which they had been loyal until to-day. The valley above which the Cedars stood had been consecrated to God by the holy lives of those who had lived there as hermit, monk and saint, and withstood there the attacks of paganism and false faiths. In fact, he likened the Maronite church to

one of the goodly cedar trees in the grove yonder, growing steadfast throughout the centuries, weathering the fiercest storms, extending its shelter like branches over its children, lifting its head to heaven, and casting its sweet savour of goodness about it. He dwelt on the loyalty of his church to the Papal See throughout times of persecution as well as in days of prosperity, and its loving attachment to Rome. And he spoke of the French Government, represented at the table, and of Maronite gratitude to France.

As he spoke, the centuries seemed to roll back, and I saw in my mind Saint Marun, that fighting saint in whose hand the missal became a sword, the Saracens who tried in vain to dislodge Christianity from the mountains, and the Franks, who, coming to the coasts on their way to the Holy City, found in the wild Maronite mountaineers their willing and zealous allies. Lastly I thought of Maronite loyalty to anti-clerical France during the Great War for the sake of the clerical schools and faithful priests she had sent to the Lebanon. For France has held the Christians of the Lebanon to her side, not by her glory or her might, or her political ambitions. She has held them through her priests and their schools, and the tie of a common faith, that faith which they were celebrating that day under the Cedars.

The instinct to carve one's name on a tree is strong in human nature, and the names carven on the Cedars of Lebanon are many. Burchkardt mentions that

on one trunk he saw a date of the seventeenth century. Lamartine's name is to be seen on another, though I did not discover it, and I have no doubt that, were one to look, one would find other names known in the annals of travel and history. For all who come to Syria make a pilgrimage to the Cedars. Maundrell, visiting the Cedars in 1697, writes :

“ These noble Trees grow amongst the Snow near the highest part of the *Lebanon* ; and are remarkable as well for their own age and largeness, as for those frequent allusions made to them in the Word of God. Here are some of them very old, and of a prodigious bulk ; and others younger, of smaller size. Of the former I could reckon up only sixteen ; and the latter are very numerous. I measur'd one of the largest, and found it twelve yards six inches in girth, and yet found ; and thirty-seven yards in the spread of its boughs. At about five or six yards from the ground, it was divided into five Limbs, each of which was equal to a great Tree.”

I am not able to ascertain whether Renan wrote of them. He must have visited them, when living in Syria. Meanwhile, it is Lamartine who, perhaps, has sung them most worthily in his *Chœur des cèdres du Liban*. He refers to an old legend that the Cross was made of cedarwood from Lebanon.

C'est nous, quand les tribus captives
Auront vu les hauteurs d'Hermon,
Qui couvrons de nos solives
L'arche immense de Salomon.

Si, plus tard, un Verbe fait homme
D'un nom plus saint adore et nomme
Son Père du haut d'une croix,
Autels de ce grand sacrifice,
De l'instrument de son supplice
Nos rameaux fourniront le bois.

CHAPTER V

SHUWEIR

I ADMIT that I am prejudiced in favour of Shuweir, but it is a prejudice shared with others. Shuweir is the village chosen by many of the faculty of the American University in Beyrut for their summer vacation, and more than one of them has a summer house there to which they bring their families year after year. They have had many years' residence in Syria in which to discover which is the best place in the Lebanon in which to live for the hottest months, and their choice means something. Even knowing this, it was by accident that I tumbled straight into the small hotel at the top of the mountain where I lived happily for six weeks, instead of into larger and noisier caravanserais. I shall always remember the joy it was, after less pleasant experiences in the Lebanon, to scramble into linen sheets at night in a room of irreproachable cleanliness ; to wake the next morning to the exquisite silence and sun-bathed perfume of the pine-woods which surround the hotel ; and then to breakfast on a terrace below, off mountain honey, eggs, peaches and *café au lait*, with the world of mountain and valley spread at one's feet, and the Mediterranean Sea beyond

climbing up into the sky, a white sail showing as a tiny white fleck on its blue, misty surface. I have said that it was silent, but it was a silence made musical by the trilling of the cicadas, by the thin trickling of the spring into a stone basin, and by the sound of distant bells ; for it was Sunday, and in the valleys beneath red-tiled village was tinkling devotion to red-tiled village across the airy gorges and deep glens. Far away, but not so very far away, rose the graciousness of great mountains, of Sannin and Kaniseh, sometimes clothed in clouds, sometimes lavender and milky blue, at some hours flushed with rose, at others fired with orange light ; their gorges brimmed up with purple shadows.

Shuweir is a restful place. Heather grows up to the very door ; you can pick blackberries without going a yard, and to lie in the pine-woods all day amidst the perfume of the resinous trunks and the incense of the sweet herbs that grow everywhere on the hill-side, is paradise enough for those who are weary in brain or body. But, as the energy of mountain air creeps into your veins—for it is nearly five thousand feet above the sea—there can be no better centre than Shuweir for seeing the Lebanon. It is only an afternoon's walk to Bikfaya and Beyt Shehab, famous for their bell foundries, or to the village of Muruj, perched on a spur above two valleys, with its seven oak trees and wind-swept beauty. On foot, too, you can reach Brummana of the pines, resting by the way at the murmuring springs of Er Aar, where bulbuls are hung in cages beneath the green trees, so that coffee-drinkers

who halt at the wayside booth of the coffee-merchant may hear their music blended with the fluid voice of the water. Nearer at hand is the miraculous intermittent spring in Lower Shuweir, the Neba of Mar Takla, where women come to burn candles, incense and oil-lamps to the saint. It is said by the villagers that whoever removes one of these votive lamps will be smitten with blindness. There is the monastery of Mar Yuhanna, in the valley below Kunshara, with its ancient church and its printing press, as well as the monastery of Mar Elias, built on a high promontory overhanging the valleys, a bare half-hour from Dhuhr esh Shuweir, as the highest of the three Shuweirs is called. It is possible, too, in the day, to visit on foot the unnamed temple below the road to Zahleh, the tomb of Greco-Roman times in the rocks beside it, and the mysterious cleft in the hills which the peasants think reaches into hell. You can climb down to visit the silk-mill at Qaqur, and the Druze village of Zera-un, or walk by way of Muruj to the ancient iron-mines visible in the hills below Sannin. You can make a two days' excursion to the summit of Sannin itself, spending the night at Baskinta, below the mountain, and making the ascent the next morning. Or you can hire mules and go to the source of the Adonis at Afqa, taking sleeping bags with you and some food to eat by the way. Grapes you can usually procure by the wayside, except high in the mountains, and for the most part for the mere asking. By taxi—and there are taxis to be had in Shuweir—you can go further afield and visit Ain Zahalta, Baruk, and Beteddin, or other

places which you may have marked out as worth visiting on the map.

The road to the Muruj is particularly attractive to the lazy because it follows the high ridge between the two valleys, so that there is little climbing up and down hill. It is a carriage road and passes beneath pine woods from time to time, and the whole way the eye is delighted by one of the widest and most beautiful stretches of mountain and valley to be seen in the whole Lebanon. If you return at sunset, the temptation is to walk backwards, for Sannin and Kaniseh rise behind you in their evening panoply of gold and purple, of rose and carmine, and to miss a moment of their ever-changing beauty seems a crime. At the cross-roads there is a small coffee-house called the Coffee-house of the Pines, where, in July, huge plums and delicious peaches may be procured, for the proprietor has an orchard hard by. This orchard, with its fountain, is a favourite resting-place for caravans coming up from the desert beyond Homs, and should you chance upon them there, they will press you to sit down and eat with them, if they are at their simple meal of bread, fruit and cheese.

Muruj itself is a quiet and attractive little village, but has no suitable hotel. Furnished houses are cheap there, I am told, and a sizeable house can be obtained for a year or a summer for a sum which works out at thirty English pounds. It has a humble little church dedicated to St. Thecla, who, for some reason, is a favourite saint in the district.

If you follow the road from Muruj to Zahleh,



Mount Kaniseh from Shuweir.



Druze khalweh, or meeting-house, in the solitudes.



Waterfalls : Ain Zahalta.

about an hour's walking will bring you to two small coffee-houses built on the side of a mountain stream which tumbles down the rocky and barren hill-side. The people of the district like to climb the mountain to the source of the spring, where, they say, one's appetite becomes enormous. There is a man in Shuweir who still boasts of the number of loaves which he ate there on one occasion.

About another half-hour along the road a footpath down the hill-side leads to another stream. I began glibly, but I must confess that I made three attempts before I succeeded in finding the ruins at Musayqa, because the directions given me were so vague. I had been told that the temple was to be seen at not more than half an hour from Muruj, and five minutes from the coffee-houses. Believe none of these smooth optimists, or you will search in vain, as I did, amongst the vineyards to the right of the road. The best way is to keep along the Zahleh road until you see the temple on a spur of rock running out into the valley below you. It is visible from the road just before the first houses of Antura are reached, and with field glasses the great blocks and general outline of the walls of the temple are easily distinguishable. Even then, it is better to secure a boy to act as guide, or you may find yourself wandering before you get to the temple, which looks near, but is in reality a good half-hour from the road. Close to the spring to which the above-mentioned foot-path leads, there are ancient cuttings in the rock, probably wine or dibis presses, and if you follow the line of the stream, with its fresh green water

mint, rushes, and blackberry brambles, and then diverge to the left, through a vineyard, you are bound to come to it. A young Druze herdsman acted as our guide, cordiality itself when he heard that we were English. "The English are our brothers," said he blithely, for the tradition of English friendship is strong amongst the Druzes even yet. "What news have you of the war?" I asked, for the Druze rebellion was at its height. "*Nahna muntaserin*, we are winning!" he confidently asserted, and added that the Druzes would drive the French out of Syria. "Don't be so sure," I warned him; "the French are strong, and they are bringing many men across the sea!" But he would not be persuaded of folly.

Only the lower courses of the great blocks of which this temple was built are now *in situ*, and the standing blocks which formed the sides of one entrance. The size of some of the blocks is enormous, and recalls the stones of the Temple of the Sun at Palmyra, and the masonry at Baalbec. The plan is easily traceable. It was not a large temple, but its position above the valley must have made it visible for miles. In the *naos*, a watchman's hut of boughs (a *kukh*) had been erected: for every large vineyard has its watchman by day and night during the grape season. These watchmen were Druzes, and they offered us water from their pitcher and grapes from the vineyard.

The young herdsman told us that he was an *akkal*, or initiate into the secrets of the Druze religion, and could not accept the cigarette which we offered, as the initiates may not "drink" tobacco, nor fermented

liquor. He pointed out the Druze *khalweh*, or meeting-place, on a hill near-by.

When we asked if there were no other antiquities close by : " There is a ' prison ' down yonder of ancient times," said he. I had been told by a peasant on the way of a cave near the temple in which an image of the sun was to be seen sculptured into the rock, and I asked if this " prison " contained a *resm* of the sun.

" There is a peacock there," he replied, and led the way down what was evidently the road which had passed beneath the temple. The " prison " when we reached it proved to be merely a Greco-Roman tomb, and the " sun " or " peacock " turned out to be the shell ornamentation above a niche. There were also portraits of the deceased sculptured rudely in the rock and much perished through age and damp ; the bearded head of a man and the head of a woman wearing a necklace. The tomb had the usual *loculi* for the reception of the bodies, and though coarsely executed, resembled many tombs of the poorer sort at Palmyra. Our Druze guide offered to show us yet another curious thing, and led us a short distance up the hill-side, where, pushing aside thistles and brambles, he indicated a hole in the rocky ground about large enough to admit a small child. He dropped a small boulder into the blackness, and a moment later we heard it strike something and rebound again and again in a long descent. The clatter grew more and more distant until it passed out of hearing.

" It falls for as long as it takes to smoke a cigarette,"

said the Druze boy ; and though this was an exaggeration, the boulder must certainly have fallen some thousands of echoing feet before it passed into silence. Such clefts in these earthquake-rent hills are not rare, and I heard of others, though this was the only wonder-hole that I actually saw.

Not far from Musayqa are Roman boundary stones marking the limits of a forest, proving that once this barren hill-side was overgrown with trees. I did not find them, though I saw several such stones in the museum of the American College of Beyrut. The owner of the vineyard in which the temple stands, who came upon us eating his grapes, told us that he was constantly coming upon foundations and stones which prove that this was a village of considerable size in ancient times. It may have grown up in the times when the iron mines were working, that have now been deserted for many years. It was the smelting of iron that was responsible for the destruction of many a forest on the sides of Lebanon, coupled with the continual hacking and hewing for building and fuel. Now, it is found cheaper to import iron than to smelt it locally, and these mines, which often date from Phoenician times, have all been abandoned.

The monastery of Mar Elias lies to the north-west of Shuweir, and is easily reached by a sandy short cut down the heathery hill-side with its brow of pines. The boom of the convent bell is so often heard at Shuweir that it grows to be the voice of a friend, and once when I went there, I thought I would take the

rope and send the sweet voice of the bell floating over the valleys beneath. The old priest gave the pull into my hand, but, though I was taken off my feet, the bell would not respond, for it takes a good deal of strength to set the clapper striking when the bell swings in its frame of stout wood. Two communities live at Mar Elias, side by side, the buildings being joined, but they have nothing to do with each other, as the one is Maronite, and the other Orthodox Greek. The Maronite building is the more modern of the two, having been rebuilt lately on the old foundations. The Greek Orthodox monks, less prosperous perhaps, still use their old church, very attractive with its sunny courtyard and outside stairway leading to the roof, from which there is a wide view over the country beneath. Within, the carvings on the eikonostasis are really fine, and there are some ancient pictures to see—notably an old map picture of Jerusalem, which is worthy of attention. These dark little Greek churches, with their ikons and their semi-pagan traditions, are more congenial to me than the somewhat tawdry Maronite churches with their conventional, blue-clad Madonnas, chocolate-box St. Antonys, and gaudy Sacred Hearts. In the little church of Mar Eliās, there are many heterogeneous relics of individual devotion : here a head kerchief, the offering of some poor peasant ; here an embroidered shawl draped over a lectern at which an old priest drones at his reading of the Testament ; here a silken scarf left as an *ex-voto* by the picture of the prophet Elijah, represented as terrible in his rage, smiting the priests of Baal with a sword of

real silver let into the wood, while a halo of silver gleams about his venerable head. Silver lamps and the ostrich eggs dear to Oriental devotion in church and mosque alike, hang above the eikonostasis, most of which dates only from 1837, though a few of the older carvings have been embodied.

I found myself coming often to the little old church, and, notably, on the occasion of the great annual Id or Feast of its patron Mar Elias. As I passed through, the village was full of groups in their best array, hurrying off to the monastery, and the carriage road crowded by taxis and carriages bringing pilgrims from the adjacent hamlets near by. It is one of the events of the year, and as I approached the monastery by the mountain path, I heard the hum and buzz of voices where there was usually the silence of seclusion. All round the monastery, and even in its precincts, pedlars had erected their booths, and sweatmeat sellers, cake-vendors, and those who were selling sherbets, were doing a roaring trade. A vendor of reed pipes played himself in order to show the quality of the music that they would produce. Beneath the trees and on the banks family groups were seated. They had brought provisions for the day, and the children were eating or playing while their elders smoked the nargileh. Monks and novices mingled happily with the crowd. Everywhere, groups of girls and of young men wandered about, the former for the most part in pseudo-Parisian frocks (with a leaning towards bright colours), flesh-coloured stockings, high-heeled shoes, and cloche hats ; while the latter were generally faithful to the

fez. Some crowded into the church, crossing themselves devoutly ; others swarmed over the building, or approached curiously the mummified bishop who lies in the gallery above the church and is reputed to have worked miraculous cures.

This gruesome gentleman is kept in a coffin with a glass lid, in which he reposes in all his robes, his withered hands emerging from embroidered sleeves and his face covered with a silk kerchief. It appears that there was nothing peculiarly saintly during his lifetime to distinguish this good man from his fellows, but the skin disease of which he was a victim had such an effect upon his body, that when the tomb was disturbed in order to place within another corpse, it was found that the flesh had remained on his bones in a state of partial preservation, a clear proof that he was no ordinary person. The body began to work miracles, and favoured visitors were permitted to take away pinches of flesh from the corpse for amulets and charms. (Hence the veil over the face, which suffered most.) Maundrell, mentioning a case in which a body found entire and blackened was attributed by the Greek priests to the fact that the man had been buried without absolution, goes on to say :

“The Man had hard fortune not to dye in the Romish Communion ; for then his Body being found so entire would have entitled him to Saintship. For the Romanists, as I have both heard and seen, are wont to find out and maintain the Relicks of Saints by this token.”

The case of the bishop at Mar Elias, however,

would prove that the Orthodox Greek community also regard mummification as a sign of sanctity.

The monastery of Mar Yuhanna is far below Dhuhr esh Shuweir, and lies in the valley, below the village of Kunshara. To get to it, you can either follow the path which skirts the valley to the south-west, going towards Kunshara (and this is the pleasanter route of the two, though longer), or you can go through Lower Shuweir following the carriage road to the south-east, leaving it at a certain point to take a short cut through the vineyards. The vineyard path is confusing as, after reaching a threshing-floor cut in the rock, it takes a turn back towards Shuweir again before plunging down into the bottom of the valley. Misled by this when I attempted this route, I got lost for an hour amongst the great boulders, thistles, and vineyards, following phantom paths which ended nowhere, mere wild animal tracks used by jackals—and porcupines too, to judge by the dropped quills.

However, at last a peasant put me right, and crossing the dry stream-bed at the bottom of the valley, I followed a small but clearly defined track which led to the monastery. The delay had cost precious daylight, and the sun was setting when the great mass of the monastery loomed close. Beside it, cut in the rock at the side of the path on the hill-side, were ancient presses, and, indeed, the whole setting suggests that the monastery may have been built upon the site of an earlier worship. Entering the courtyard, we ascended into an upper building,

where a monk, of whom we demanded whether we could see the printing-press, declared that it was too late, and that we must come at another time. Applying to higher authority, however, permission was given us, and a kindly old monk took us down to the older monastery—for there are two monasteries and three churches, as well as a school ; the more ancient buildings being on a lower level on the hill-side. Mar Yuhanna has the reputation of having produced one of the first printing-presses in Syria, an honourable distinction of which it is justly proud. Our white-haired cicerone unlocked some doors, and took us into the room in which the brother who had made it kept his press and printed his books. The press was simple and primitive, though of as recent a date as the early nineteenth century, but it was a pioneer venture in this backward land. In a case on the wall were the blocks which the good brother had used for his wood-cuts, representing for the most part saints, or decorative panels. These were all carved by the monk himself, and in the same case pious hands had placed his skull and that of his pupil and assistant. The industrious man liked, said our informant, to carve his blocks and make his letters in the open air, sitting beneath an oak-tree outside, on a platform which gave him a good view of the valley, the villages, the winding roads, and the distant heights with snow-crowned Sannin rising above all like the benediction of God in the sunlight. Had all the religious of the Lebanon been of his stamp, there would be more progress and enlightenment in Christian Syria to-day.

The monastery is of the Greek Catholic rite, and its school is of some importance. In the failing light we entered the oldest of the three churches, built, our guide told us, some seven centuries ago. The doorway had once been three feet high, but had been enlarged. Within, he lit a taper to show us the eikons on the screen, but the light was too flickering to enable us to examine the place thoroughly. It appeared to resemble the lower church of Mar Jirius near Qal'at al Hosn, and must have been built about the same epoch. Then we were conducted to the long refectory, where tables set with earthen pitchers and flat loaves were ready for the evening meal, and our hosts pressed us not only to stay and eat, but to spend the night. We declined the offer, meaning to return home by the light of the full moon, but drank gratefully the water they brought us, which they said came from their subterranean spring, reached by a hundred steps cut into the rock, at the bottom of which is a pool. These ancient steps, coupled with other marks of antiquity, incline one to think, as I have said, that here was once the shrine of an earlier deity, possibly the water-spirit of the spring.

CHAPTER VI

SILK IN THE LEBANON

LONG ago, when there was a flourishing Phœnicia on the shores of the Mediterranean, silk in a raw state used to be brought into Syria by the caravans that plodded their way across the tedious deserts from the Far East. In Syria, the silk was dyed crimson or purple by the cunning dyers of Tyre, woven into rich materials, embroidered by the craftsmen, and disposed of by middlemen to merchants all over the civilised world of the day, together with the other luxuries for which Syria was famous, metalwork, linen, perfumes, nard, toilet oils, and dancing girls.

But the silk industry was not really indigenous to the country until Syria had become a Roman province. The Emperor Justinian, towards the end of the third century after Christ, introduced the silk-worm and planted mulberries. Since then, the industry has been one of the main sources of revenue to the people of the Lebanon, and on the terraces of the mountains the broad-leaved mulberry is cultivated as assiduously as the vine. Poorly paid though it is, the rearing of the worms is one of the main peasant industries, and, though little science is employed, no

thermometers for gauging the temperature of the sheds, no very careful grading of eggs or leaves, silk of good quality is procured year by year by the agents of the silk factories, who go from village to village collecting the cocoons, for which they pay so much the oke according to the prices obtaining that season. Many a housewife adds a small sum to the household income by her diligence in looking after her silkworm shed. Not only must she be vigilant by day, but she must rise in the chilly night to keep the voracious little creatures supplied with food, for by night as well as by day their steady munch, munch is actually audible as they nibble through the piles of fresh leaves provided for them. When the worm has woven its elaborate golden shroud, the result is a fine, strong-fibred silk, which is exported in large quantities to Europe.

The season for the worms was over, but I thought I should like to see a silk factory in the working. There are many in the Lebanon, but the nearest to the village of Shuweir, where I was staying, was at a village named Qaqur, about an hour away. It was reached by a rough footpath down the precipitous side of the hill, or rather by two paths ; a bridle track for mules, and a yet steeper short cut—*qadimiya*, as it is called in the Lebanon—for pedestrians. The rough, loose stones and slippery sand make such descents very heavy on shoes, but at every moment there is a new aspect of mountain and misty valley, a fresh vista of the distant sea between rugged hills sprinkled with red-roofed villages ; here a pine wood, fringing a hill-top, there a wooded precipice watered

by unseen streams, where the rhododendron, oak and pine give shade, and the ground is a garden of every scented herb. Down, down we went, sometimes scrambling or slipping, along the tortuous path, and saw our destination below us long before we got to it. It was only a tiny village, and among the houses the silk factory was easily distinguishable by its larger size and its tiled roof; for Qaqur, lying off the beaten track, is still old-fashioned enough to have flat-topped houses. Perhaps the villagers have no relations in America. They tell me that the first thing that a Lebanese emigrant does when he has achieved a little prosperity in the new country is to send home to his relatives the price of a tiled roof. The flat roofs are picturesque, but they let the rain in and have to be rolled after every storm, whereas the red tiles are really weather-proof. In any case, in Qaqur, one sees the flat-roofed stone houses with outside staircases of long ago.

The name Qaqur means a pile of stones, or rather it is the name given to those little columns of single stones which serve in Arab countries as landmarks, or sometimes as wayfarers' marks on a road of pilgrimage. It was well named, for, above the silk factory, the rocks were piled one above the other perpendicularly on the hill-side. We traversed a mulberry garden, and reached a fountain cut into the rock, from which there gushed a double stream of water, abundant and cool. A woman standing there to fill her pitcher, offered us some to drink, and as we took the pitcher, spouted at the side, I noticed

that her hands were bleached and sodden. I was soon to see why. Later on the owner of the silk factory praised the water. There was no such water in all the Lebanon, he said. In Qaqur people merely died of old age, for the water was a veritable medicine, and a few glasses of it would cure any of the ills that overtake human flesh.

The mill was by the fountain, and it was here that we met the owner, who offered politely to show us everything that there was to see, while with one hand he dragged after him his small son. The latter was dressed as a girl and wore long hair, possibly in fulfilment of a vow, or to avert the evil eye.

The first thing that we noticed on entering the long room which was the mill proper was the curious and nauseating smell, and the next, the steam. There were two rows of revolving wooden wheels upon which the silk was being wound as the skilful fingers of the girl operatives guided the threads through the hooks, and these wheels were kept in motion by two men who worked a crank at the end of each row. An overseer, wielding a stick, admonished them if they turned the handle unevenly or slackened the pace. Each girl or woman sat before a basin of hot water, the temperature being maintained by steam which passed into the water from a pipe, and in this basin were a number of cocoons. Her business was to feed the wheels above, and deftly she discarded the empty cocoons as they bobbed in the hot water, substituting a fresh thread, which she started by finding the end with her fingers. The thin filaments of pure gold

passed on to the wheel, and when the wheel was full the hank was taken off to dry and an empty reel substituted.

The cocoons are graded roughly as soon as they reach the factory, the inferior qualities making a harsh silk called mshaka, which is not thought good enough to send to Europe, but is employed in local weaving. The price of such silk this year (1925) is eighty to three hundred Syrian piastres the oke. The next quality is sold for one and a half gold pounds the oke, and the finest quality of all, which is sent exclusively to France, is three pounds the oke, or 270 to 280 francs the kilo.

The girl who showed me how she worked was a pretty young woman of about twenty-two, with dark hair and soft grey eyes fringed with black lashes. Several of the women are Druzes, but for this work they discard their concealing veils.

I enquired about the hours of work.

The proprietor told us that they worked from sunrise to sunset.

“ Then in June the hours are very long ! ”

He explained that in summer the most skilled workers got five or even seven piastres a day more.

“ What is the highest wage that a woman can earn ? ”

He replied that she could earn twenty-five piastres (Syrian) in winter, and thirty to thirty-two in summer.

Now the Syrian pound—a hundred piastres, stands between four and five shillings, so that a shilling a

day might be taken as the average wage of a worker in the silk factory if she is skilled.

“ And as to hours off ? ”

The girls got one hour off in the day, half an hour at nine o'clock for one meal, half an hour off at two for another.

With such hours and such wages, one looked to see pale faces and wasted forms, but the majority of these mountain girls looked fresh-faced and well-nourished. It must be the water, so praised by the mill-owner, or perhaps the mountain air, which blows healthfully into the factory through doors wide open at each end of the long room.

We passed from the mill to see the furnace for heating the cistern from which the steam enters the pipes in the factory. Stokers were feeding it with fir boughs out of the neighbouring woods, and the fragrant smoke filled the shed. Above, on the roof, there were two heaps of dismantled cocoons, the dead body of the grub showing through the transparent covering. One heap was merely for manure, the other was of cocoons upon which pickings enough remained to make them saleable for the silk still to be detached from them by patient fingers. It struck me that the strong fibrous inner sheaths might be utilised for paper if some commercial genius found a way of milling them, but this has never yet been attempted.

The grubs are of course killed before silk is wound from the cocoons, and this is done by subjecting the cocoons to steam. They are placed on trays in a kind of cupboard, the door of which is sealed up with mud

when it is full. The steam enters through a pipe on the floor, and there is a small flap in the door which admits a human hand. After ten minutes someone opens this and takes out a cocoon. If the grub is found to be still living the cocoons are left in a little longer, but ten minutes is usually sufficient to kill the living creature within its silken sheath. A rough wooden stairway took us to a loft above the mill. Here, on shelves, the cocoons are put to dry after their steam bath, and for a month or more are daily turned over lest they should suffer from damp. Then they are considered fit for the operatives downstairs.

Our way back led us through the neighbouring Druze village of Zera-un, and as we passed under the overhanging rocks we met a pretty Druze girl, who pulled her veil across her face, not so thoroughly that I could not see her blue eyes and her rosy cheeks. We wanted to combine our visit to the silk mill with a quest for hill honey, and the mill owner had told us that we might expect to find some in the house of the sheikh. Up the rough steep steps of the village we climbed—for Zera-un is perched like a cluster of swallows' nests against the face of the gorge. At last, guided by the sheikh's brother, a blue-eyed, pleasantly-spoken young Druze, wearing the traditional dress, we reached the house. It was the best house in the village and wore an almost *ferangi* air; its balcony poised giddily above the height and decorated by flowering plants. Our business about the honey was interrupted by the eager offer of hospitality. Would we not enter?

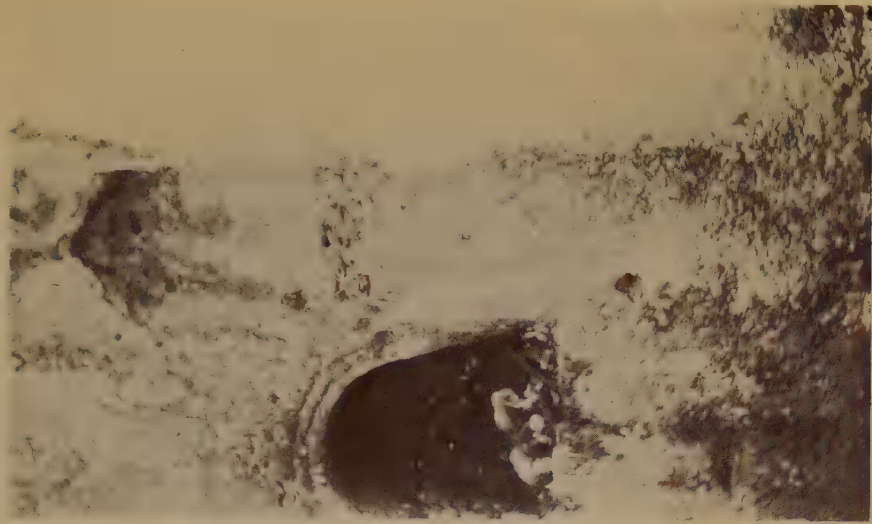
Would we not spend the night? There were good beds, clean and fit for strangers. We politely refused, but said we should be glad of a drink of water.

"Fadhalu!" was the joyous answer, and we went into the house to sit on a divan by the verandah with its view over the miles of hill and valley above which the sheikh's house was airily perched. The Druze housewife kept the half of her face covered, but beneath she was wreathed in smiles. How eager they were to do all that they could for the strangers! We must wait and rest—they had gone to cut us grapes: they would show us the direct path back, and the sun had not yet set. Meanwhile clouds of scented sherbet were set before us, and a dish of fresh, black figs. Surely the spirits of Philemon and Baucis have their home somewhere in these hospitality-loving mountains, where to utter a mere greeting meets with the immediate response "Said wa umbarek! Fadhalu!" (May you be happy and blessed! Favour us!) The "favouring" signifies "Sit down and eat with us," or "Enter our house," or the nearest form of cordiality which occurs to the speaker. To be a stranger in the Lebanon is to be "taken in" in the Scriptural and not the idiomatic sense—taken into house and into heart.

We had positive difficulty in escaping from these good people, but at last were climbing by steps and steep bridle path towards the pines at the top of the mountain. The sun was already near its setting, and Kaniseh, around whose peak a film of cloud was wrapped like a Druze woman's veil, was on fire with all the



Mural paintings in apse of Mar Phocas, Amiin.



Niches containing votive stones, Cave of Mar Iirius, Lunel.



The Palace of a Prince of the Lebanon, Beteddin.



Assyrian panels at Ras el Kelb.

colours of a Mexican opal, a dream of fair and distant colour. Here the hill-side flamed, there it was wrapped in cloud or shadow.

At last the tired silk-workers in the mill, already far below, would be going to their homes to prepare the evening meal for their men folk, themselves no idlers. Just below our hotel at Shuweir masons from these villages were at work on a half-built house, beginning their task before the glow of summer sunrise was off the mountains. That meant a start before dawn and an hour's stiff climb up the mountain-side before the work of the day began. But in this air toil is light and labour easy, though hours are long and wages small. There are no trades unions in the Lebanon, so long feudal and subject to autocratic lords. Nor does the peasant fear work, for the mountains breed men.

But I wander away from silk. In the old days of paganism the priests of the rural temples used to exorcise evil spirits which might threaten the prosperity of vineyard, mill or orchard. To-day the churches still exercise the function. There are prayers to be read when silkworms are being reared, invoking the blessing of God and repelling the powers of demons, jinns, and the evil eye. There are prayers for protecting the mulberry trees.

"I conjure you by the holy and many-eyed cherubim, by the six-winged seraphim, who fly and hover round the throne, crying 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Sabaoth! Glory to God, Amen'; I conjure you by the holy angels, and by all the glorious

powers, and by the myriads of myriads, and the thousands of thousands who stand in great awe before the glory of the Lord, that ye injure and corrupt not the vineyards, field, orchard, trees, or herbs of So-and-So. If ye do not obey me I shall pray God, Who loveth mankind, to send His angel who has the charge of the beasts of the field, that he may bind you with iron and kill you with lead. . . .”

Yearly benefit accrues to the monks in certain convents of the Lebanon from the silk cultivators. Burckhardt, writing of Qannubin in the Qadisha, mentions the custom as prevalent in his day.

“During the winter, the peasants suspend their silkworms in bags to the portrait of some favourite saint, and implore his influence for a plenteous harvest of silk ; from this custom the convent derives a considerable income.”

Thus, even such humble things as the mulberry tree and the silkworm have come under the protection of whatever gods there be, from the days of the Roman Empire even until now.

CHAPTER VII

HAMMANA, AIN ZAHALTA, AND BETEDDIN

ALL three of these villages, which are, or should be, on the list of every visitor to the Lebanon, are within one day's journey from Shuweir by car, and the road is one of the loveliest in the Lebanon. It follows the Muruj ridge until the cross-ways are reached, and then turns eastward to El Metein, a long, winding village of mixed Christian and Druze population, lying at the head of a long valley opening to the sea. The country round El Metein is very rocky, in spite of the numerous vineyards which have been terraced out on the hillsides. Here and there are districts which defy even the labour and patience of the Lebanese, and lie grey and bare beneath the sun, fantastically-shaped boulders, scarred and corroded by the falling water and snow of the winter season, indicating that earthquakes and upheavals have here wrought chaos and confusion. Now and again the bed of a winter torrent is passed, dry in summer and autumn, hollowed and torn by the violence of the foaming water. Wild flowers are few in the hot season, except for the queenly blue thistle, which is the loveliest summer flower of the Lebanon.

El Metein, with its loggias and arched windows, its

balconies gay with scarlet geranium and flaming zinnias, and its well-built stone houses, looks very Sicilian. Past El Metein, a stone sarcophagus lies derelict by the roadside, and what appears to be ancient masonry. The road runs on through vine and pine-clad slopes, past an occasional hamlet, until it climbs the top of the next ridge of mountain, parallel with the Shuweir-Muruj ridge, where there is a Druze village called Bzebdin. Coming back once at evening through this place, we saw a Druze woman coming down the pine-scented heights, in the orange rays of the sun, a basket full of grapes on her head, tall and gracious. At sight of us she pulled the veil across her face, and in answer to our enquiry as to the price of her grapes, "I cannot sell, but will give you plenty," said she, and setting down her basket, pressed bunches of grapes upon us. We took one or two and went on. Some Druze boys were coming uphill, the panniers of their donkeys laden with the spoil of the vineyards. From them, too, we tried to buy, but in vain. They would have given us the half, but we did not wish to abuse their generosity. A little further on, we espied a man in a hat—a Christian. The spirit of curiosity was now upon us—surely he would sell! But no, mountain hospitality forbade—would we not pick as much as we liked? There was nothing for it: we abandoned the attempt to buy, and feasted upon the grapes which the good people of Bzebdin had forced us to accept, and excellent they were.

Hammana is a large and flourishing village rapidly

becoming popular as a summer resort on account of its height and its abundance of good water. It has several silk factories: the well-known smell is wafted out to you as you pass the long, low buildings. Its population is largely Druze, and the women met on the road pull their white wimples across their faces leaving an eye uncovered to stare with. The veiling is not always so quick that one cannot catch a glimpse of a pretty face or two.

The celebrated *shaghur* or cascade of Hammana is a little off the road. The face of a rock precipice rises sheer above the village, itself some eleven hundred metres above sea-level, and looks like the escarpment of a citadel. The spring from which the cascade falls is almost at the top of this frowning height, and the water tumbles foaming for some three hundred feet and then divides into two swift streams. One stream flows through the inevitable coffee-house: wherever there is a waterfall or a fountain in the Lebanon, there is usually a coffee-house. With water on either side, and some chairs planted in the midst of the stream and protected from the sun by awnings, this is a favourite place in which to drink coffee or eat peaches, and the Lebanese come here for the whole of an indolent day. High up, by the source, on the sunbaked rock, there is a patch of vegetation, upon which venturesome black goats pasture, for it is lush with the spray of falling waters.

It was by way of Hammana that we went to Ain Zahalta. The car-road skirts the edge of wild and rocky

gorges which remind one of the country around Jerusalem, and at one point, divided from us by a deep ravine, we saw a Druze meeting-house, or *khalweh*, built against the steep side of a cliff. It was an unpretentious building shaded by a few trees, walnut or mulberry. The Druzes always choose wild and unfrequented spots for these *khalwehs*, and as it is impossible for one not of their religion to enter, it is said that politics are discussed there by the *akkals*, or elders of the Druzes, without fear of Government spies. It was in this district that the massacre of the Christians in 1860 was pursued with most vigour, and though, during the present rebellion of the Druzes, the Druze population here have been outwardly quiet, there is small doubt that at the least sign that they could profitably take a hand, they would have joined their brothers in faith of the Jebel Druze.

From this point one begins to see more poplars, and occasionally cypresses, apostrophe marks in light and inky green against the beauty of misty valleys and blue hills. Here and there is an *arzan*, a crow's nest hut, or hut on stilts, roughly constructed of dried boughs, into which a watcher climbs to keep guard over crops and vineyards. Every vineyard has one such *natur*, or guardian, to keep off depredators, whether human or jackals.

Gradually the ever climbing and descending road, constantly doubling back upon itself, took us within sight of Ain Zahalta, and of a blackish patch on the high mountains above which, we were told, were the Cedars of Baruk, less celebrated than the Cedars above

the Qadisha, but still a remnant, like the more famous grove, of the once productive forests of Lebanon.

As we came down into the valley below Ain Zahalta, we passed a pottery which has a reputation in the Lebanon for the fineness of its glaze. In an effort to capture the taste of Levantine visitors from the towns, it has begun to decorate the brown glaze with gold and silver paint, with atrocious results. It makes pots and oil-jars for the simple folk of the hills, and for the town visitors openwork dishes ornamented with flowers and heads.

In the narrow valley at the foot of the mountain two streams fall foaming from the rocks, making a never-ending voice of waters. These are the falls of Ain Zahalta which tourists from Sofar and Beirut come to see, and there are at least five coffee-houses built nest-like on the sides of the green gorge amongst rocks and maiden-hair fern and wild flowers. As these coffee-booths are bird-like erections of dry boughs and rough pine stems, something like the watchers' huts, they do not materially detract from the picturesqueness of this Lebanese Shanklin Chine. It is what guide-books call a "beauty spot," with all the ear-marks, even to the scattered paper and post-cards. Syrian families will bring their food for the day and the baby's hammock, and spend the entire day in such coffee-houses. One may ask where the coffee-house proprietor comes in with such unprofitable guests. He subsists by supplying them with coffee, with nargilehs, with glasses of tea, or with fruit. But if a visitor were

to sit at a table all day and ask for nothing but a glass of spring water, he would be accommodated.

Ain Zahalta itself is at least a quarter of an hour up the steep hillside by the road. I noticed two clean and habitable-looking hotels at the top, and highest of all is a pretentious house built by a Syrian who made his money in America and returned to his native place. It is the old story. The young Syrian goes to America or Australia, or another new country ; makes enough money to line his pocket, then returns to his native place in the Lebanon, often to marry a village girl. After a vain effort to trace some antiquities said to be near Ain Zahalta, of the existence of which no inhabitant seemed to be aware, we went on to Baruk, at the foot of stony hills, where, in a shady garden, watered by several streams and sheltered by trees and pergolas of fir boughs, we followed the custom of the country and spread our lunch on a table, merely ordering from the proprietor a few grapes and cups of coffee and the customary glasses of water. The excellence of the water in each place is a matter of pride for the inhabitants, who profess to taste an actual difference in flavour between the water of one spring and that of another, although to a European palate there is nothing to distinguish the one from the other. If you wish to prove yourself a connoisseur, sip the water carefully, like a man sampling a glass of port, and then say critically, " Yes, this water is good and sweet. It is better than the water of ——" (the next village).

As we ate our luncheon, we were agreeably entertained by the party who sat under the neighbouring

tree. They were singing and clapping their hands to the music of a young and extremely pretty girl who was playing popular Syrian songs on the 'oud or lute. Her head-dress, a black veil bound about her head by a circlet of blue beads, and her brick-red dress, exactly suited her rosy colour and bright, soft eyes. But her chief charm was her wide and wholly delightful smile, which made her irresistible.

Presently they too began to eat their midday meal, and round loaves of immense circumference (markúk), but as thin as brown paper, were brought to eat with the curdled milk, crushed wheat and other dishes. I longed to photograph the beauty, but lacked the impertinence to ask. A Syrian friend came to my aid and asked her father, who was in nowise offended, but helped to pose the damsel under a tree by the stream. "Send us a copy!" they asked, and gave us an address. Of course it should have been done, but that I had the misfortune to lose the card which they gave me. I only remember that the lady's name was Adiba Nujeim, which literally translated means "Polite Little Star." If the eyes of Adiba Nujeim ever read this paragraph, I tender an apology for seeming bad faith.

Lunch over, we went on towards the celebrated village and castle of Beyt-ed-Din or, more properly, Bteddin, for it is a Syriac word meaning "the two teats" and refers to the mountains on which it is built. It is famous as the residence of the great Emir Beshir, the last great prince of the Lebanon. In the East, from the earliest times, the personalities of men count more

than their achievements, and men live on in the legend and gossip of posterity. Such men, to take them at random, were the Caliph Harun ar Rashid, the wag Nasreddin Khodja, and, to go much further back, Nimrud the Hunter. A man who is a personality has tales told and manufactured about him in his lifetime, and after his death he becomes a legend with incredible swiftness. The Arab is a story-teller by nature, delights in personalities, and is not averse to improving an anecdote when he retails it. Such characters in Syria were the Emir Fakhreddin and the Emir Beshir Shehab, or Beshir the Great, who lived at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century.

The Emir Beshir impressed more than his own countrymen, and left his mark on international politics. Want of his support contributed to Napoleon's failure at Akka: Sir Sidney Smith, the British admiral, courted his influence and was his friend; Lady Hester Stanhope, Churchill, Burckhardt, and other travellers were entertained by him and have left records of him. Burckhardt says that the time he travelled with one of the Emir's men in the Lebanon was the only time he was treated like a great man, and even after his downfall and exile, the prince was considered an eminent personage. But he was never as great as the legend of the countryside makes him. In his earlier career his power was shadowed over by that of Djezzar Pasha and the Druze Sheikh Beshir, and his later years were marked by failure and defeated intrigue. He was a strong man, however, and a personality, and in the



A beauty of Baruk, Lebanon. The instrument is an 'oud.

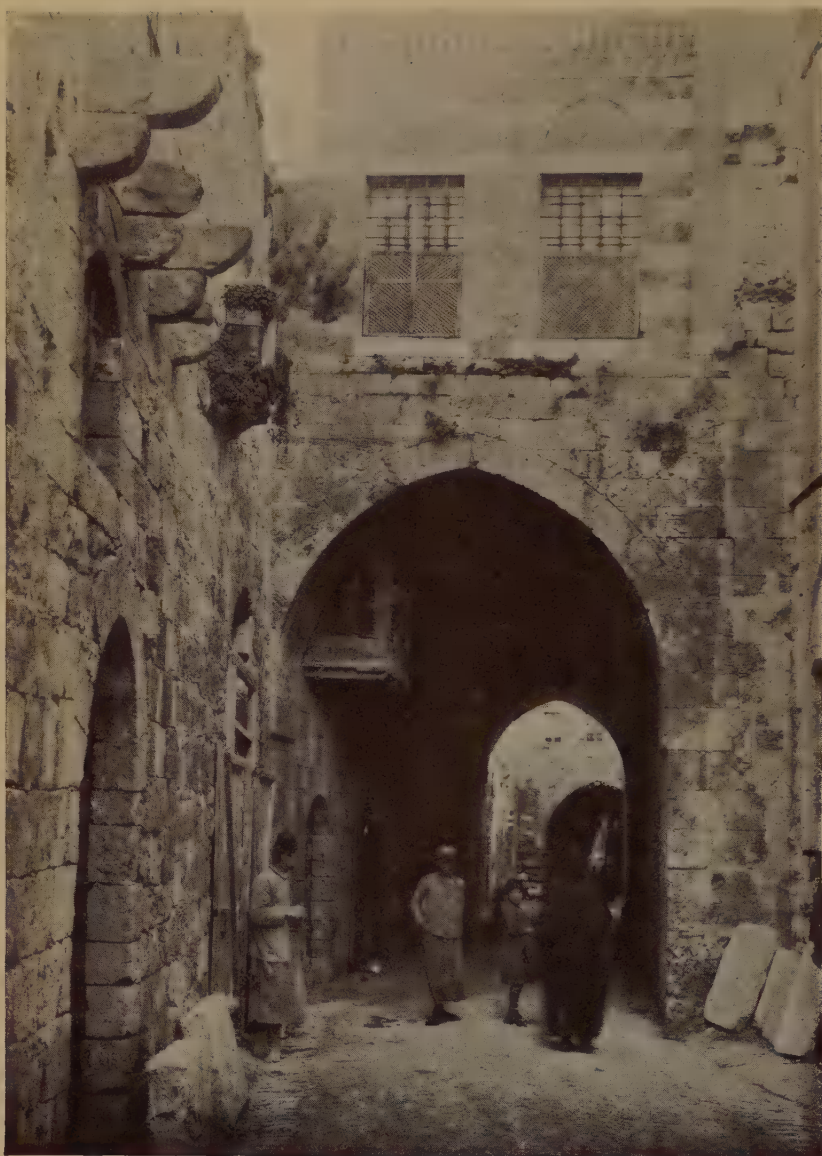


Photo by]

Street in Sidon.

[Sarrafian, Beirut.

Lebanon his fame will outlive that of his contemporaries. Old men are still alive who remember what their fathers told them about him. They describe his fierce, overhanging eyebrows, his short, powerful stature, his shaggy beard, his piercing eyes, his air of command. "When he looked at a lion," one narrator told me, "the lion had to bow his head!"

Accounts are contradictory. Burckhardt hints that he was miserly, and that his one extravagance was building. Churchill says that he would entertain for days together two or three thousand footmen and five or six thousand horsemen. Dr. F. J. Bliss retells the favourite anecdote concerning him thus :

Once a man seeking to curry favour with the prince said to him : " My lord, yesterday on the fearsome plain of Buqa'a I met a woman whom I knew not, walking alone and covered with jewels. ' How dare you fare alone ? ' I asked her. ' Know you not,' she answered, ' that the Emir Beshir rules in Lebanon ? ' "

" Take the dog away," roared the Emir, " and give him forty lashes for speaking to the woman."

Peace obtained while he was governor of the Lebanon and the trade of brigand went out of fashion. His methods were cruel and summary, but the result was good, and his reputation for equity high. An anecdote was told me by a Syrian which, though probably apocryphal, shows the type of story which is still in circulation about the great man. " The Emir wished to marry," said he, " and caused three maidens to be brought before him so that he might select a bride. He chose a Druze maiden, and ordered her to

become a Christian, so that he might marry her at once. The girl refused to change her faith. He bellowed with rage, and the girl fell on the floor fainting with terror. 'Take her off to the kitchens,' said the Emir. 'If she won't be my wife, she can become my wife's servant!' He then made a second choice, and to the damsel thus honoured he showed a lifelong respect and devotion."

About the Emir's Christianity, a certain doubt exists. He belonged to the family of the Shehabs, which claimed descent from the Prophet, but had mostly embraced Christianity. Burckhardt* says:

"The Shehab, as I have already mentioned, were formerly members of the true Mussulman faith, and they never have had among them any followers of the doctrines of the Druzes. They still affect publicly to observe the Mahommedan rites, they profess to fast during the Ramadan, and the Pasha still treats them as Turks; but it is no longer matter of doubt, that the greater part of the Shehab, with the Emir Beshir at their head, have really embraced Christianity; that branch only of the family which governs at Rasheya and Hasbeya continue in the religion of their ancestors.

"Although the Christians of the mountain have thus become more attached to their prince, their condition, on the whole, is not bettered, as the Emir scarcely dares do justice to a Christian against a Druze; still, however, the Christians rejoice in having a prince of their own faith, and whose counsellors and household are, with few exceptions, of the same religion. There

* "Journey" of 1812.

are not more than forty or fifty persons about him who are not Christians. One of the prince's daughters lately married a Druze of an Emir family, who was not permitted to celebrate the nuptials till he had been instructed in the doctrines of Christianity, had been baptized and had received the sacrament. How far the Shehab may be sincere in their professions, I am unable to decide ; it is probable that if their interests should require it, they would again embrace the religion of their ancestors."

The palace which he built is now empty, and is shown to visitors who care to wander about its gardens, with their splashing fountains and the sumptuous halls which once harboured so much power and magnificence. It is rather a tawdry affair, in spite of the vastness of its design, and gives one the impression that a certain niggardliness came in to correct the magnificence of first conceptions. The palace hangs at the edge of a precipice, and is guarded by dark green cypresses and tall poplars. The gardens are paradises of speckled shade, with their ornamental arches and Saracen gateways, their beds of flowers and their wonderful views of the barren, sun-smitten gorges and mountains beyond. Here is always the sound of falling waters, for the prince had aqueducts made to bring mountain streams to the place and, close to the palace, water falls foaming down the precipitous rock.

The entrance is through an outer courtyard, and then into the inner and highly-ornamented courtyard, in the midst of which is a fountain sending a jet up to an enormous height in the air. To the left of the

building* are the vast stables, now falling into ruin. The whole palace is built in the style of the eighteenth century palaces of Damascus. But while here and there a creditable piece of work in the old manner is seen, the rest of the room will be painted to imitate marble and precious stones, imparting to the whole a very second-rate appearance. The ceilings are painted, and in time may acquire the illuminated missal look of the ceilings at the Azhem palace at Damascus, but the imitation mosaics will never be anything else but execrable. Much furniture of the Emir's day is still there, walnut wardrobes, vast beds, cupboards, tables inlaid with mother-of-pearl and so on, and from the immense size of the place one is able to imagine something of the state in which this last of the great Lebanese emirs lived with his family, court and guests. The private baths, about which Lamartine wrote so enthusiastically, are luxurious with variegated marbles and cool fountains, the light which enters them being subdued by the greenery without. Christian or not, it is certain that the Emir's ladies were strictly veiled, and one wonders what the women of his household were like. Did they chatter a little French and English? In the midst of the bloody intrigues with which his life was filled, what was the Emir to his family?

There is something Early Victorian about the place, in spite of all its Orientalism. One can almost see European visitors in side-whiskers about the recep-

* During the massacres of 1860, the women of the palace of Bteddin, then Moslems, gave shelter to some Christians, who were the only survivors of the community.

tion rooms, and one can well imagine from the doubtful taste of the building that the Emir and his successors filled the house with European etceteras, from many clocks to musical boxes and woolwork horrors. Still, it is in the grand manner, and a paradise, though a pinchbeck paradise.

Sitting on a balcony in the garden, looking down into the sun-flooded gorge beneath, we became aware of a high and all but windowless building close to the palace pleasaunce.

"What is that?" we asked, and were told that it was the prison, in which a hundred and eighty men were serving life-sentences.

"And do they never come out?"

We were told that they are allowed an hour's exercise in the yard.

"What work do they do?"

None, we were told; there was none for them to do.

It was depressing, sitting there in that bird-haunted, flower-scented place, to think that such things can be. But the French Government in Syria has its hands full, and has not had time yet, apparently, to think about the occupation of prisoners. Many of them came from the far worse dungeons of Tripoli, and have thus exchanged their lot for one a little better.

CHAPTER VIII

SIDON

JUST beyond the Pigeon Rocks, to which fashionable ladies of Beyrut love to drive in the late afternoon, there are some queer, dense-growing pine-woods, the stems close together and no thicker than a man's thigh. The soil beneath is a golden sand, soft, thick and deep. These woods are a delightful spot for a picnic, for, after tea in the shade of the sweet-scented trees, through which the sea-breeze makes perpetual music, a short climb over the dunes brings one to the most delightful sandy bathing beach, where the lapis-lazuli sea breaks into lazy foam at the encounter with the shore.

Further on, the pine-woods are stronger and higher, and through the tall, tawny columns one may see caravans of camels threading their way, the long necks of the beasts festooned with blue beads, and their backs laden with heavy bales, while, above, the wind makes a sighing amongst the thick dark-green needles. These pines are really an army of defence and were planted with a definite purpose—to resist the slow but steady encroachment of the sand thrown up by the sea, sands of Africa invading Asia, brought from Egypt

by the perpetual motion of the water, washed up by the daily tides and driven inland by the winds. The line is very marked where the yellow sand meets the rocky, reddish soil of the coast, and the conflict is between fertility and barrenness, between the insidious advance of the barren sand and the rich soil which it threatens to engulf.

And through this debatable land runs the road to Sidon and Tyre.

Presently, the pines give way to olives, which stretch away to the sea—groves on groves—the largest olive orchard in the country, it is said, though here and there there is the vivider green of the mulberry. To the olives and mulberries succeed orange groves, across which the sea-wind blows the scent of the first blossom. All the time one is divided from the sea by this belt of vivid, glossy verdure. Accustomed as I am to the bleached tints of sun-smitten Mesopotamia, I can never get used to the changing blues and greens of the Mediterranean on this lovely coast. The colour of the sea is so incredible—the deep ultramarine of a blue-bag at the horizon and then, in streaks and patches, every gradation and shade covered by the words blue and green, here forget-me-not and there jade, in the depths of the rock-sheltered pools the blue of the gentian, at the crests of the foamy breakers the green of the glacier. And for setting, there are here the tawny sands, pomegranate red in places, with Beyrut rising beyond them in its whiteness.

Mulberry-trees make one think of silk-worms, and soon an unmistakable smell tells one that a silk-mill

is at hand. It stands by the road at Damur, and if you care to stop and go in, you can see the girls at work over the steaming basins, the bobbins wreathed with golden silk moving above their heads. But when the Damur river—in autumn little more than a sandy thread meandering through a wide fiumara—has been crossed the character of the country changes and becomes dour, barren and rocky. The side of the road is a necropolis. The car speeds by a long succession of rock tombs, derelict sarcophagi and other traces of the habitation of the dead, long ago rifled of what was worth carrying away.

Rounding Ras Jedia, one comes once more into an area of cultivation—houses, coffee-houses and gardens. This is Al Jiyeh, supposed once to have been the site of the city of Porphyriion. Here the murex was found in abundance in ancient times, and so great was the production of the royal dye that the city took its name from the purple.

“ Who has not heard how Tyrian shells
Enclosed the blue, that dye of dyes
Whereof one drop worked miracles,
And coloured like Astarte’s eyes
Raw silk the merchant sells ? ”

From Al Jiyeh comes a delightful view of Sidon, running out into the sea on its spit of land. So must the coasting sailing-vessels have seen this queen of Phœnician cities in the days of King Hiram.

It is the loveliest of all the coast cities of Syria, to my mind. Rich in many springs—for water is



On the road to Bsharreh. The small dark patch on the hills in the distance is the Cedars. (*See pp. 57, 170.*)



The sea-castle, Sidon.



Fisher of Sidon.

everywhere, in aqueducts overgrown with maiden-hair fern and moss, in cisterns, in gushing fountains, and in tall water-towers—it is embowered in gardens and groves, vividly green even in the dry season ; and blessed with a profusion of oranges, bananas, almonds and other fruit trees, with here and there the column of the poplar, the deeper green of the ilex, and the dark, slender flame of the cypress. In Sidon as yet the ugly process of Westernisation has not destroyed the beauty of the place. Even yet there is a prevalence of Oriental dress among the women, and consequently of grace. Sidon is largely Mahommedan and Druze, and therefore conservative as to dress, and one encounters reverend-looking persons in turbans, fellahin wearing the keffiyeh instead of the battered European hat, black-wimpled women, and Druze girls ready to pull their softly-falling white veil over their comely faces. Such costumes suit better the vaulted ways and deep shadows of Sidon than the reach-me-down clothing from France worn by the Westernised Orientals of Beyrut. One picture lingers in my mind, that of a Druze woman coming through a banana grove, swathed in white from head to foot. She looked a wraith, so tall, slim and veiled she was, and she carried her head high as one of a fearless race. Perhaps the news of the war, already raging between her people and the French, had roused in her the old dreams of domination of the world which is to be the eventual high destiny of the Druze race, according to their belief.

The bazaars of Sidon ! The vaulted streets, the

patches of sun, the sudden delight of carved fountain or of whitewashed dome and minaret against the deep blue sky, or of green-black cypresses rising beside ancient walls! The mossy water-towers, the colour of the fruit-shops with their pomegranates, apples, grapes, purple egg-plants and golden bananas! Above all, the lights and shadows! Yes, there is nothing but exclamation marks for such as these. I think that with a sketch-book and a paint-box an artist would spend weeks in Sidon without being tempted to adventure further.

In the upper town rises the ruins of the Castle of St. Louis, the fortress known to the Crusaders as the Qal'at al Mezzeh. It was built in the thirteenth century and one can wander about it and climb up its broken steps to see the sea-coast for miles and the town beneath the walls. But more entrancing is the Qal'at al Bahr, the twelfth century fortress which, standing on a rock in the sea, is reached by an ancient and ruined bridge of stone, mended where necessary by planks. Of the original building little is left, for the castle was rebuilt by the Turks, only one long wall of the original Crusading patchwork remaining, built of large blocks, with here and there ancient monoliths inserted like plums in the pudding. The castle is now turned to practical uses as a petrol store.

On the bridge, we paused to watch a fisherman wading in the sea up to his very chin. He wore a white helmet on his head, bore a basket of fish on his back, and bore a net in his hand. Whenever the water became too deep for him, he swam to a shallower spot.

His method was to beat the rocks so as to frighten out the fish that hid in their shadows ; then he threw out his net with a swift, deft movement before him, and gathered it in hand over hand. I believe that this method of fishing is used all along the coast, and the fisherman who employs it must be half a fish himself.

CHAPTER IX

THE HIGHWAY FROM BEYRUT TO TRIPOLI

THERE are certain ancient roads on the face of the earth which have been used since long before the known history of man, and will be used as long as the forces of Nature leave them intact ; roads trodden by nation after nation, army after army ; roads beside which shrines have been raised to faith after faith, as varied as the races which practised them ; cosmopolitan, world roads ; roads for the feet of conquerors and the hurrying retreat of the vanquished ; roads which have made history. Such a road is the highway which runs the length of the Syrian coast, from Tyre to Antioch. History is writ upon it as on a long scroll. By the wayside there are prehistoric caves in which flint tools have long ago become embedded in and part of the rock, legacy of prehistoric man. There are salt pans chiselled in the rocky flats by the sea, used from the earliest times until to-day. There are Phœnician tombs and fanes, Assyrian, Egyptian and Persian stelæ, Egyptian and Greco-Roman temples, grottoes of Astarte, Phœnician harbours, Roman bridges, Crusading fortresses and chapels, monuments of Moslem conquest, memorials of feudal Arab chieftains,

even unto the last inscriptions, at Dog River and in Beirut, of Allenby and Gouraud. Prehistoric man, Phœnician, Assyrian, Egyptian, Persian, Greek, Jew, Roman, Crusader, Moslem, and modern European, each has left behind him traces of himself and of his faith. Triumphant armies have succeeded triumphant armies upon the road. Faith has mastered and harried faith. It has seen the priests of Astarte flouted by fanatical monks. It has seen Julian tearing down the lampoons of the citizens of Antioch and weeping over the burning of pagan shrines. It has seen heterogeneous processions of pilgrim Crusaders and the wild, victory-flushed hordes of Islam. It has borne the tread of elephants of war, of the priceless mares of the emirs, and the rumble of the tanks and armoured cars of to-day. Apart from war, it has always been a highway of commerce. Long caravans of camels bearing merchandise and grain have paced it for centuries, and to-day it is dusty with the ceaseless passage of car and lorry.

It is a beautiful road. It leads beside a sea so wonderfully changeful, so vividly blue, that one is continually searching for fresh comparisons on the palette of simile. Delphinium, cobalt, cerulean, jade, and chrysoprase are colour-words too crude and harsh to express its infinite intensity and living softness; the depths near the horizon, the shifting greens near the foamy coast, the emerald and sapphire lights where the waves break and seethe on the dark rocks. And above it tower the heights of the Lebanon, snow-crowned for nine months out of every twelve, broken

by the deep and sacred gorges which have ever been associated with the more mysterious cults of the many religions which Syria has, and does still, profess. Though I have never been from end to end of it, I have traversed and re-traversed many sections of it, and every time found something fresh to see, another finger-print of history for those who run to read, for one has never finished with discovery on this wonderful road. Nine out of ten people tear along it in a cloud of white dust : the tenth may take an hour to a mile and then have had barely time to glance at all that there was to be seen in that mile, let alone study it.

I am not observant or informed enough to write about a tithe of what I saw. Moreover, blasting operations in the quarries, chance discoveries, building operations and the scientific enquiries of archæologists are always deciphering more words on the obliterated pages of this road which is a book. I should like to have turned more pages. I wanted to go to Tartus, where is the great Fort of Tortosa, built by the Crusaders, and the lovely Norman chapel of Our Lady. I should like to have seen the great stronghold of Qal'at al Markab, and visited Latakia, Antioch, and the valley of Daphne. But these things must wait until yet another visit. I confess to being among the travellers who are Boswells rather than Johnsons. For me the small details count unduly. It delights me as much to find a grotto where poor women come to suspend their rags and make their semi-pagan vows as to see a well-preserved Crusading church. I like to hear a tale about a water-sprite as much as good solid history—and, after all,

are not these things part of the history of human nature, which, in the end, is the most absorbing history of all ?

The road from Beyrut northwards at first follows the tram-way, and that, for a time, pursues the line of a necropolis along the hillside. Building operations there constantly bring to light sarcophagi, sepulchral chambers and rock tombs. The hill must have been used by successive races on account of its rocky face. An iron gate which opens into an untidy-looking yard near a depôt of the Near East Relief at the northern end of the town will admit you to see one of these burial chambers which was converted into a wayside chapel and dedicated to Saidat al Abzaz, Our Lady of Milk. Trees grow by the entrance of the tomb, and to these, Moslem women whose supply of breast milk is failing come timidly to attach votive rags, not liking to enter the Christian place, but hoping that Sitt Mariam will help them. Within is a sepulchral chamber in fairly good condition, with eleven loculi and room for more that were never cut. This was evidently a family tomb in pagan times, and its spaciousness led pious folk to turn it into a chapel. Up to quite recently, I am told, there was an altar there, but since the great incursion of Armenian refugees into the neighbourhood, sacrilege has been feared, and the altar carried away and placed in the church of St. Michael near by. Nevertheless, it has been replaced by six broken columns, stood upright on the site of the vanished altar, and on these, when I visited it, five candles were

burning as testimony that vows had been made, and on the floor were broken potsherds. By chance? No, by design. It is an old custom and dates back to a period far anterior to Christianity. There is at Bludan in the Anti-Lebanon an ancient altar-platform, or holy-place in a grove, which is covered by layers of potsherds which go back far into the centuries before Christ. The place is known as Umm Shakakif, or Mother of Potsherds, and from time immemorial it has been the custom to vow pots there. As soon as the petition made has been granted, the petitioner breaks the pot and leaves it there. To what spirit the pots are dedicated and the supplications made is never clear, but it is probably to the spirit of the grove. And the women who come to beg the help of Saidat al Abzaz are following the same pagan custom.

It would be superfluous to describe the many inscriptions on the rocks by the roadside at Dog River, though not the least pleasant emotion which one has there, when all is said, is caused by the simple statement which joined the others such a short time ago—when Allenby passed on the road of conquerors. The stelæ of the Assyrian kings bear special significance for those, like the author, who have stood above the buried palaces at Niniveh and followed in part the road which took the Assyrian armies westward. Marcus Aurelius's inscription is the graven voice of one who has become the friend of thought in all ages, while Napoleon III's reminds one that the bombastic person who cut it obliterated in so doing an Assyrian

stelæ. The most prominent and recent of all is that of General Gouraud, right upon the road, the design and work of an Armenian sculptor. The commission was made a matter of competition in Syria, and so poor were the designs submitted by the natives, that it was an Armenian who won it, inartistic as the design is. One climbs by a rocky path to see the upper stelæ, where Assyrian and Egyptian kings, in the traditional stiff attitudes, are portrayed in bas-relief on the weather-beaten rock. A short while ago an attempt was made to protect the bas-reliefs with glass, for most of the cuneiform inscriptions have already been obliterated by wind and weather, but the stones of small boys of the neighbourhood quickly destroyed it.

The place itself, with its fern-grown, mossy aqueduct, its Arab bridge, and its greenness, is charming. There is a path along the rocks to the right which leads along the gorge, and if it is followed for about two hours, a grotto called the Mugharat al Jaita is reached. It is a place of pilgrimage, and there are stories of its magic powers which seem to prove that, like the Grotto at Afqa, it must at one time have been the seat of some Nature cult. The cave contains water, and it is believed by the people that if a person burns incense in the cave and remains there a night, he will see the spirit of the future and know what is going to happen to him. They relate a story of a man whose good luck was so astonishing and unfailing that he began to grow nervous, and sent a poor man to the cave on his behalf to beg that the gifts might be discontinued and that he might be left to enjoy the blessings he now possessed,

or else the eye of envy would fall on him and blast everything. The poor man fulfilled his mission, and after the usual ceremonies summoned the Luck of the rich man and delivered his message. A gay and smiling figure appeared with open hands, and laughed when she heard the petition. "I am the Luck of the rich man," she said, "and he need not fear the evil eye, for I cannot help giving to him both now and in the future." Having tested the rich man's Luck, the poor man thought he would summon his own. The charm worked, and an ugly and ill-conditioned hag appeared. "What do you want?" she snarled. "Don't bother me about your bad fortune. You've got all I can give you, and you mustn't expect anything else."

Maundrell* describes the Nahr al Kelb and its inscriptions at some length and says of the name :

"It derives its name from an Idol in the form of a Dog or Wolf, which was worshipped, and is said to have pronounc'd Oracles at this place. The Image is pretended to be shewn to strangers at this day, lying in the Sea with its heels upward : I mean the Body of it ; for its Oracular head is reported to have been broken off, and carry'd to *Venice*, where (if fame be true) it may be seen at this day."

The lovely Bay of Juneh, with Juneh itself lying by the sea and on the heights above, is one of the most

* "A Journey from Aleppo to Jerusalem at Easter, A.D. 1697," by Hen. Maundrell, M.A.

beautiful parts of the whole road. The carriage road which ascends from Juneh to Raifun, passing the gigantic figure of the Virgin, is, I think, without exception the steepest and the most absurdly constructed of any of the main carriage roads in the Lebanon. But the views are marvellous, especially if you get out by the plateau of Our Lady of the Lebanon, and walk to the promontory of rock on which the colossal white figure stands. It is a modern statue, of no particular merit, with a chapel beneath it and a stairway round the high pedestal to the base of the statue. The Virgin looks seaward and extends her hands as if asking protection for her children, and is visible for miles on sea and land. A cult has grown up around Sitt al Harisa, Our Lady of the Guard, as she is known on the Lebanon, and a little garden has been planted beside the chapel. From the edge of this little garden, giddily perched on its shelf of mountain, one can see Juneh and the Bay lying beneath, a sapphire sea engirdled by deep green, and the whole coast line as far as Jubeil on the north and Sidon on the south. The cultivation below is spread out like a patchwork quilt, and the town of Juneh, with its gay red roofs, looks like a Swiss-made toy town from a child's play-box. All round are the heights of the Lebanon with their vineyards and mulberry groves climbing up to the bleaker regions of Ghineh and Raifun. Following the road further, one comes to Ghosta, that picturesque village balanced on the top of a round detached hill, and to Bkarkeh, the summer residence of the Maronite Patriarch. The hillside is almost perpendicular, and the turnings

bring a car so near the edge that one wonders less at the skill of the drivers than at the stupidity of the engineers. However, Mar Elias is the patron of motor cars, and doubtless he exerts protective powers over the taxis which go up and down.

Juneh itself is a prosperous little town. Up till quite recently, the Near East Relief had a flourishing girls' orphanage there, which has since closed down. Just where the railway runs under the rock by the sea into the town, there is a little shrine worth the visiting, for pilgrims come to it from places as far distant as Egypt. It is known as the Cave of Mar Jirius, or St. George. It was from here, say the local gossips, that St. George and his horse rested in a cave before going out to fight the dragon. It is a grotto into which the sea washes, and upon the rock, in pre-Christian times, niches were cut. Some of the niches are still *in situ* and are used for the reception of candles and votive offerings, but the rock upon which two other niches were carved has fallen into the sea. The niches are of various shapes, one square, one round, another topped by a rounded arch, and another by a pointed arch. Each niche, except those in the sea, is full of stones, of varying sizes, round which rags have been tied. Some are large stones, others are tiny pebbles, but each stone has a fragment of cloth, silk or cotton tied about it. Other stones are stuck into crannies in the rock. Candle-grease and blackened marks in the niches show where candles and incense have burned. There are steps cut in the rock, evidently of great antiquity, and near the entrance to the cave a

locked box is placed for offerings, of which more anon.

I questioned the boy who hung about the place. He told me the story of St. George, and added that women who desire children come here. The stones, apparently, are weights. If her prayer is answered, the fortunate woman gives the weight of the stone in gold, or incense, as a thank-offering. Moreover, women with sick children wade into the water below, and pass their children three times through the waves. If the garment laid upon them floats off, the child will be cured; if it clings to the wet body, the saint has rejected their petition. The niches on the rock in the sea, he said, were the manger from which St. George's horse had fed, and the mark of its hoof respectively.

"Yes," he added warmly, seeing a shade of disbelief in the eye of my companion, "it is true! All the people will tell you."

"But why," asked my friend, "is the mark made by the hoof so large?"

"Because the horse was the horse of a saint."

Absurd question! Are saints and their horses to be bounded by mere dimensions? Had we not seen similar marks left by many saints on rocks in the Near East, and not only Christian, but Moslem, saints. Ali, the son-in-law of Mahommed, left the mark of his hand in more than one place, and the hands of ten men will not fit into the imprint! Women who make offerings in order to bear children, employ the services of an eldest child at the cave. If the child is a girl,

the baby which is to be born will be a girl, and if a boy, the baby will be a boy. I fancy the services of a girl are seldom requisitioned.

We dropped offerings into the box, and the boy enquired if we had seen the statues which St. George made on the rock. No, we had not. He took us up to the road, and on the rock overhanging the railway, he indicated two excrescences formed by drippings of water on the limestone. They bore faint likeness to the human form.

"Formerly," said the boy, "people used to lay their offerings on the rock. But a man and a woman stole the money, and to punish them St. George took them and threw them against the rock, where they stuck. You see by the breasts that the figure yonder is the woman."

"And since then, there has been a locked box! Who receives the offerings?"

"The priest of the church."

Of all the traces which the Romans left behind them on the road, perhaps the bridge at Maamiltein is the finest. It is no longer used, and stands beside the modern bridge over which the traffic passes to-day abandoned to its dreams of ancient glory and marching legions. Not far away is a fourteenth century watch-tower on a rocky promontory known as Ras er Resif. It is called St. Helena's Tower, and of it Maundrell writes:

"Towards the further side of the Bay, we came to a Square Tower, or Castle, of which kind there are many



Plateau thought to be base of temple above Astarte grotto (Asfuriyah), near mouth of Nahr Ibrahim.



Roman bridge Maamiltein.



The ancient breakwater at Batrun (Botrys).

all along the Coast for several days' journey from this place. They are said to have been built by the Empress *Helena*, for the protection of the Country from *Pirates*."

St. Helena is much honoured in the Lebanon, and one of the most impressive feasts in the year is the *Id es Salib*—the Feast of the Cross, when, at nightfall, every hilltop in the Lebanon blazes with bonfires. It is supposedly in memory of the glad day when St. Helena, as a result of her miraculous dream, discovered the True Cross at Jerusalem, and the news of the finding of the super-relic was conveyed from Jerusalem to Constantinople by means of fires which flashed from hilltop to hilltop. But there is something of the ancient Baal worship in the feast too, for, in the villages especially, there are dances round the fires and children are passed through the flames. I myself saw one boy passed through the fire at Beyrut. It is a feast which costs the Lebanon a yearly toll of firewood, but of that the people reckon little. On the sea-shore, at Beyrut, near the house at which I was staying, they built their bonfire round a living tree—the only one for some distance, and as its blackened skeleton resisted the Maronite blaze, it was sacrificed in a second bonfire at the Orthodox Greek feast.

At Borja, further along the road, there is a Phœnician necropolis, the tombs of which are worthy of note because, instead of being cut horizontally as usual, they follow the slope of the hillside. There is a fine sepulchral grotto close by with arches over the loculi.

Stop the car at Ain Markús, a little further on still, and you find by the roadside deep steps cut down into the rock which descend into a cave. Tradition says that this cave was formerly the opening to a subterranean gallery leading to a temple, upon the site of which a church, Mar Sophia, now stands. Of the original temple there is scarcely a trace, but the tradition is interesting, and it may yet be that excavation will reveal something in the neighbourhood. The road next passes the ancient salt pans cut in the rock at Boyir, and the fourteenth century tower of Burj Emmouey. A little further on, the Nahr Ibrahim, the sacred Adonis, runs prosaically into the sea under an Arab bridge. Maundrell says of it: "Leaving *Gibyle* we came in one hour to a fair large River, with a Stone Bridge over it, of only one Arch, but that exceeding wide and lofty. To this River the Turks give the name of *Ibrahim Bassa* ; but it is doubtless the ancient River *Adonis*, so famous for the Idolatrous Rites perform'd here in lamentation of *Adonis*."

Near the Adonis one would expect a relic of Astarte worship, and it is not far to seek, though humble enough. It is a wide-mouthed grotto, evidently partially shaped by man, known locally as Mugharat al Asfuriyah. There one can still see the niche in which at some time, doubtless, the statue of the goddess stood, and the platform above must have supported a temple, which has long since disappeared. But the cave itself has an interest which goes further back than the worship of Astarte, for it has been declared by experts to be a prehistoric cave, full of worked flints and bones which

have become embedded into the rock. Close by, traces of what must have been a workshop for the manufacture of flint tools and weapons were recently discovered by Monsieur Brossé, and when I left Syria he was expecting to examine the cave with a well-known authority on prehistoric man.

Soon after crossing the Fidar River one arrives at the modern Jubeil, the Giblet of the Crusaders, the Byblus of the Greeks, the Gebel of the Phœnicians. In many ways it is the most interesting town on the whole coast, and has yielded a rich treasure of Phœnician objects and sarcophagi to the excavators. What can one see in a day in this sunbaked, ancient city of Astarte by the sea as one hurries through? Little, when all is confessed. Of Astarte, little or nothing. Of the Phœnicians, whose city of the dead has been brought to light by the sea-shore, there is more to learn in the museum at Beyrut, whither they took the enamelled ornaments showing Egyptian influences, the sacrificial knives inlaid with gold and silver, the vases, and the other objects which were found in the tombs; lovely things which no visitor who goes to Beyrut should fail to see. One may wander down amongst the deep shafts which were cut in the rock to lower the heavy stone sarcophagi and descend to view the huge sarcophagus with a horned lid which was discovered by Monsieur Brossé, since the war, in a tomb which yielded some of the richest objects, the date of which is fixed by him as about the eighteenth century before Christ. It was too heavy to transport—

its weight is estimated at nine tons—and it is solid rather than beautiful, being entirely without decoration. It has been thought, from the sacerdotal nature of the objects found in this tomb, which show Egyptian influences, that its occupant may have been a priest of Isis, but another and more probable theory is that he was a governor of the city and that these beautiful enamels and inlaid objects were tributes to his kingly power and position as chief worshipper of the gods. The tomb was reached by a subterranean passage through the rock, and it was the chance fall of a piece of rock which led to the discovery of this passage, and incidentally of the tomb to which it led. Further up the so-called Tomb of Hiram was discovered.

Tombs apart, and there are many and of all periods, one sees the hand of the Phœnician in the ancient harbour, from which Phœnician mariners set sail on their coasting ships with merchandise for all the Near East, for part of the masonry is declared by archæologists to be Phœnician. Was cedarwood from Lebanon shipped from here for King Solomon ; did the vessels bearing ivory, apes and peacocks touch at this little blue, land-locked anchorage ?

Of the Crusader there remains much. There is the fortress, the upper part of which was rebuilt in Turkish times, on a position by the harbour which dominates the coast and town. You can mount into the upper stories, go from chamber to chamber, see the blue sea from the archways and ramparts, and the re-erected columns of the temple of Isis just beneath. The stronghold was built above the customary subterranean



The harbour, Jubeil, showing ancient masonry.



Crusaders' fortress rebuilt by Turks : Jubeil.

cistern for the collection and storage of rain water, and it is thought that the foundations of the building prove that a fortress of some kind existed on the site before the times of the Crusaders. Though now in ruins, the place was used as a fort by the Emir Beshir, who kept forty men here for the defence of the coast.

In the town, too, there is much masonry dating from the times of the Crusaders, but the most delightful thing that these Christian lords left behind them is the church of St. John, with its charming baptistery. It looks so friendlily Western, that the Arabic inscriptions on the tombstones let into the church walls seem almost incongruous. It is in use to-day.

It was at Jubeil that the armies of the Crusaders stayed three days beside the Nahr Ibrahim before setting out on their march on the coast road by way of the Dog River, Beyrut and Sidon, for Jerusalem. They had chosen the coast route because they wished to keep in touch with their ships. At Jubeil, too, they were joined by many recruits from the mountains, the Lebanese Christians of whom William of Tyre writes that they were, "*genz mout hardies et preuz es armes et meint granz secours avoient fet à nos crestiens quand ils se combatoient à nos ennemis.*"

Before the car comes to Batrun, the village of Amshit is seen to the right of the road. It was at Amshit that the great Frenchman and archæologist, Ernest Renan, buried his sister and faithful companion, Henriette. He wrote :

"La population du village, à laquelle elle avait

inspiré beaucoup d'attachement, suivit son cerceuil. Les moyens d'embaumement manquaient tout à fait. Il fallut songer à un dépôt provisoire. Zakhia offrit pour cela le caveau de Michael Tobia, situé à l'extrémité du village, près d'une jolie chapelle et à l'ombre de beaux palmiers. Il demanda seulement que quand on l'élèverait, une inscription indiquât qu'une Française avait reposé en ce lieu. C'est là qu'elle est encore. J'hésite à la tirer de ces belles montagnes où elle a passé de si doux moments, du milieu de ces bonnes gens qu'elle aimait, pour la déposer dans nos tristes cimitières qui lui faisaient horreur. Sans doute je veux qu'elle soit un jour près de moi ; mais qui peut dire en quel coin du monde il reposera ? Qu'elle m'attende donc sous les palmiers d'Amschit, sur la terre des mystères antiques, près de la sainte Byblos."

It was at Ghazir that the brother and sister lived longest, and it was at Ghazir that most of the celebrated "Vie de Jésus" was written. Who reads Renan's "Life of Jesus" now ? Biblical criticism has progressed so far, that its daring manner falls flat on the ears of a more sceptical generation. In Syria it is the archæologist rather than the biographer of Jesus that is remembered, and there are people in Ghazir to-day, I am told, old men and women, who remember Renan, who "saw him plain," as well as that devoted little old maid who so constantly inspired his genius, the sister who lies buried at Amshit.

Batrun—the ancient Botrys, once a flourishing



Sepulchral grotto : Jubeil.



Church of St. John the Well-Beloved at Amiun, showing the rock-tombs beneath.



Batrun (Botrys): Wall of the Crusaders' castle.

Greco-Phœnician colony, seems to have plenty of its sons in America, to judge by the number of red-roofed houses which have been recently built, a sure sign of relatives in the prosperous New World. If you leave the car standing for a moment and turn off into a mulberry grove on the right, you find yourself in a Greek amphitheatre. Overgrown with weeds and tall asphodels as they are, the seats are plainly visible. For the rest there is only a jumble of fallen stone, with here and there a battered acanthus leaf on the capital of a column, and here and there the indication of a vomitory. Soon, it may be completely built over and obliterated. But pass down the cobbled and sun-smitten little market between the rows of harness-makers, bakers, and fruit-vendors, and thence by way of the modern harbour, where fishing boats rock idly in the deep, still, blue water; over battered rocks overgrown by sea-lavender, and you come to the ancient quarries, protected by a long breakwater, like a wall hewn out of the living rock. Burckhardt calls it "an artificial shelter, anciently formed by excavating the rocks, and forming part of them into a wall of moderate thickness for the length of one hundred paces, and to the height of twelve feet. It was probably behind this wall that the boats of Botrys anciently found shelter from the westerly gales." It is thought that this breakwater is the work of the Phœnicians. In the rocks, by the clear pools, I saw two rows of little depressions, one above the other. I recognised the game: it was played in ancient Phœnicia as well in modern Syria, and consists of betting about stones thrown into the

little hollows. By the ancient quarries yellow sea-poppies grow, and were it not that the Syrian likes to sully such places with ordures, it would be a pleasant place in which to sit by the sea.

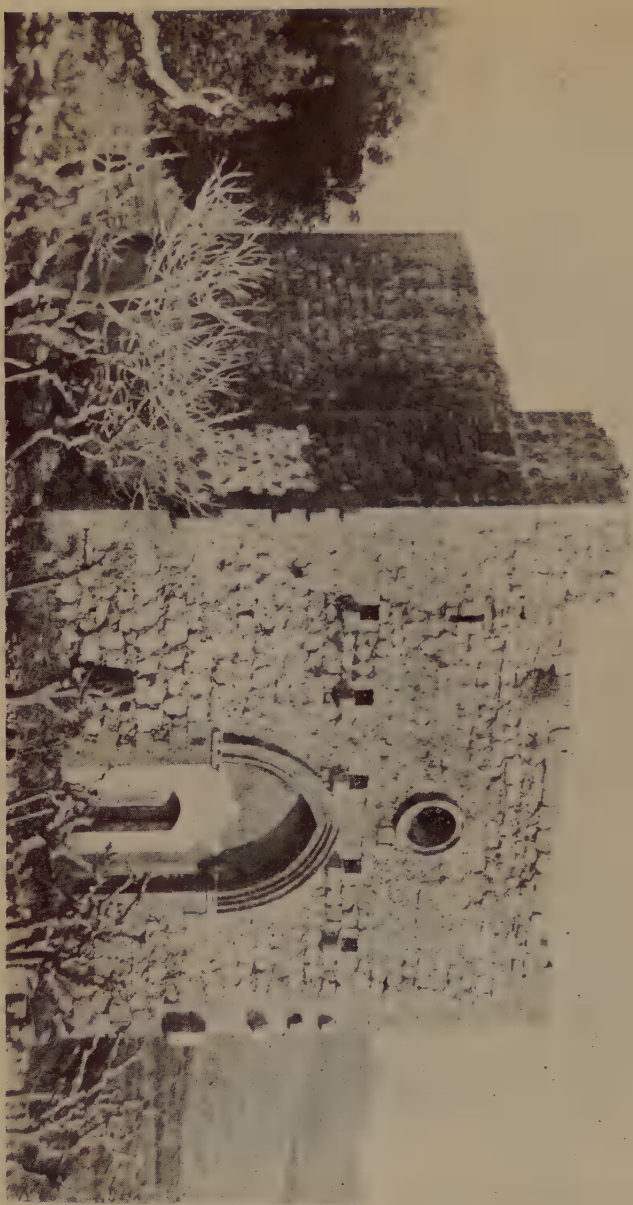
At Batrun, too, the Crusaders built a stronghold, of which little remains but portions of the massive walls. There is a curious ornament on one stone of the North wall, which the inhabitants call "the elephant." But it is really reversed, and Monsieur Brossé told me he thought the symbol to be that known as "the Amazon's earring," which often appears on Phœnician sarcophagi of the third and fourth century before Christ, used, it is supposed, as a symbol of life. If you wander about its narrow streets, you will find many relics of the past at Batrun. Ancient stones have been re-used in the building of the houses, here and there in the court-yards there are fragments of columns, inscriptions, or classical ornamentation. But then this holds good of almost any town along the coast.

Outside Batrun, to the right on a hill, there is another Crusaders' chapel, that of Sabur, or the Saviour. It is a simple little structure resembling that of Amiun, but any paintings that may have once adorned its walls have long since disappeared. To the left there is a field of asphodels, tall and gracious.

The road now follows the coast fairly closely, and from time to time one sees tombs and grottoes cut into the surface of the rock. Between Batrun and Enfeh there is a stretch of road which has been called the Syrian Corniche, for it rises above the sea and is cut



Enfeh : Ancient rock cutting utilised as a castle moat by the Crusaders.



Chapel of St. Saviour, Batrun.

into the rock, sometimes passing through it. The sea which washes the rocks below is exquisitely blue and clear, and the view of the coast as it sweeps out to Ras Shekka is magnificent. To the right is the road to Amiun and the Cedars, and the towering heights of the Northern Lebanon. I have traced its course elsewhere.

And so one comes to Enfeh, which word means "nose," and was corrupted to Nefin by the Crusaders. It does indeed jut out into the sea like the proboscis of a Cyrano. Close to the modern harbour for fishing boats there are two Crusading churches, side by side—one ruined and the other still in use. The latter was locked when I visited it, and when I asked for the key the priest was sent for, a dirty old man who presently arrived to let me in. The rite followed was the Greek Orthodox, and within there was nothing noteworthy. It was of the usual simple, oblong shape, with a single nave and an apse at the east end. The second church, which was partly choked up with filth, was of the same pattern, but its eikonostasis was unusual in that it had only two openings into the sanctuary instead of three.

A walk over the rough rocks round the small bay brings one to what are certainly some of the most interesting and problematic remains along the whole coast. I refer to the curious chambers, niches, foundations and steps which are cut into the rock on the right of the harbour, below the site of the Crusaders' fortress. Phœnician? Who can say! The French archæologists do not commit themselves to any opinion, but admit

that the probabilities are in favour of the Phœnician theory. Some of the chambers, all carefully chiselled out, are comparatively large and seem complete, others seem to have formed part of constructions built on to them. We scrambled over the hot rocks and examined them severally. Further on, a passage cut through the rock is reached, about a hundred feet across, and more than a hundred feet deep, an elaborate and carefully executed piece of work. It is supposed that this cutting, which is wide enough to allow ships to pass through, was the outer moat of the Crusaders' castle, and there is small doubt that it was employed as such. But at the further end there are large blocks of stone which look like the work of Phœnician masons, and more than one archæologist inclines to the theory that the Crusaders merely utilised an existing and ancient cutting. The inner fosse of the castle is further on, and one can see the place cut in the rock for the drawbridge and portcullis. Beyond it, there is another rock chamber, below the site of the Crusaders' castle, which has been so utterly destroyed that nothing intelligible remains. It was built, like the sea-castle at Sidon, on a spit of rock running out into the sea.

If one crosses that spit one comes across more mysterious rock foundations and cuttings. A large artificial wedge hewn from the rock with a wide cavern beneath into which the sea rushes and withdraws with a sucking sound, was possibly, Monsieur Brossé thinks, a temple, a theory borne out by the broken fragments of columns which lie about it. Its local name, the Bath of Venus, is significant. Just above it, growing

in the rocks with the scantiest of root-hold, I found the lovely scented lily which the children called "zambéh." A little nearer the shore is what was evidently another little sanctuary in the rock, just above a cutting made for the launching of ships. It has three niches, and a central niche for the reception of the image of the god or goddess, probably some deity to whom the fishermen prayed for good luck or for protection from tempest. Fishermen to-day spread their nets here to dry in the sun, but do not pray here to some Christian version of a pagan nature-god. They go a few steps further to another small Crusaders' chapel, which may have been within the castle precincts. It is falling into ruin, the paintings on its walls have crumbled off, and no masses are now said in it, but the fisher folk and their wives still burn candles and incense here to Our Lady of the Winds—so that the weather-deity has not migrated far.

Near the rock sanctuary are some queer, square rock chambers cut into the rock over which one walks. Were they for the dead or the living? No one knows, and as yet no satisfactory explanation can be offered, because no excavation or systematic examination of the place has yet been undertaken. The town of Batrun itself is full of rock tombs, and some are in public ways, and almost obliterated by the tread of many feet.

I have never stopped at Kalamun—the ancient Kalamos. But just above it there is a chapel grotto of Santa Marina, the Lebanese saint who has a shrine

near Qannubin. It was at Kalamun that she was born. I enquired of Monsieur Brossé what he could tell me concerning her, and he was able to inform me very exactly, as a short time ago, when he was employed in copying the very interesting paintings representing scenes from the saint's life to be seen on the walls of the chapel, he had been at pains to find out her true history, which I have set down elsewhere.* The sequel is edifying. When the many miracles worked by the dead body of St. Marina had spread her fame far and wide, the authorities at Constantinople determined to secure the precious relic for the imperial city. They therefore sent orders to the community at Qannubin to send them the body of the saint. The brothers of Qannubin were forced to comply, but, unwilling to part with their saint entirely, they took off an arm. Later on, owing to insecurities in the mountain, this relic was transferred to Kalamos, the saint's birthplace. During the sojourn of the Crusaders its fame as a miracle-working relic continued, with the result that when the Crusaders left the country, it was taken to Cyprus, and eventually to France. Up till modern times the ancient chapel of Ste. Marina existed not far from Notre Dame in Paris. When the chapel was pulled down, the arm of Saint Marina was placed with the relics in Notre Dame, where it continues until to-day.

The body, given into the care of a monastery in Constantinople by the Patriarch, had its vicissitudes. The monastery fell upon evil times, and eventually the

* See Chapter X.



Rock chamber at Enfeh.



Crusaders' Chapel : Enfeh.

monks were thankful to sell the relic to a rich merchant of Venice. Perhaps the name of Marina attracted the merchant-prince of the Bride of the Sea. In any case, he carried the mutilated body to Venice and established a cult of the saint in that city. There to this day, it remains in the chapel of Santa Marina, a shrine very popular with the fisherfolk of Venice.

And so to Tripoli : but Tripoli must have a chapter to itself.

CHAPTER X

THE HOLY VALLEY (THE VALLEY OF THE QADISHA) :
ITS SHRINES AND ITS SAINTS

To visit the valley of the Qadisha is to leave the modern world for the time and to be plunged, body and soul, into the atmosphere of the Middle Ages. In this wonderful gorge, thousands of feet deep and so narrow that the sun only penetrates it completely at mid-day, time has stood still for many centuries. It is one of the most romantic of ravines, lying like a rift between high mountains which some upheaval long ages ago rent violently apart. This chasm during the course of ages has been deepened by the Qadisha, which begins as a silver cascade at the head of the gorge, dropping hundreds of feet, and then rushing along the bottom of the valley, where it is met by the many mountain streams which tumble and foam down the rocks from the springs and snows above. In the twilight of this bottom it is green and fertile, and full of trees ; while up on the craggy heights it is stony and all but bare. Above, still higher, are the grey, implacable heights of the Lebanon, which grow tender with rose light

at dawn and sunset, and which, for eight months of the year, are covered with snow.

It is a wild and savage place in spite of its beauty, and forces the mind to contemplate things eternal. Perhaps this, as well as its natural features, made the early Christians of Syria choose this valley as the stronghold of their faith: for here there has been continuous Christian worship since the days when Christianity first took root in the country. Here, tradition says, on the heights below the cedar-clad mountains, Saint Marun and his monks, sturdy sons of the Lebanon, fought and routed the pagan and the Moslem. It is a natural fortress, and its steep, precipitous scarps and bluffs concealed and sheltered innumerable chapels, anchorages and convents. *Qadisha* means "holy," and the odour of sanctity clings to it still. Not a chapel, however ruined and difficult of access, but has its votaries and its miracles. Here, as in the days of the Thebaid, are solitary devotees who live coney-like in their holes in the rock. Here sufferers seek the help of saints before doctors, and still look on science as of the Devil.

Here, dim and half-effaced, one can still see the paintings made by pious hands on the walls of rock sanctuaries many hundreds of years ago, and visit grottoes which have endured as places of worship ever since the first centuries after Christ. Here the Devil is still pictured and feared as he was feared in the Middle Ages, horns and hoofs and all, and the power of idols for bale and bane is dreaded and guarded against. And all this, in spite of the fact that there are

schools everywhere, schools kept by the Jesuits, or the Lazarists, or the good sisters. But then, the destruction of faith is naturally not part of the curriculum, and if a little too much superstition has entered the minds of these pupils, more than is warranted by the Church to-day, well—what matters! They are devout, very devout, and good Christians—and that is all that really matters much in the Catholic schools. If a child passes his examinations (and these children have astonishing memories which enable them to reel off pages by heart) and can speak French well, he is educated.

Indeed, if it were not for the darker side of this mediævalism one would be glad to preserve it, for the sake of its simplicity and its untroubled faith. But the sinister side is present, and, however interesting it may be to observe the arrested progress of a community, it is hardly healthy, in the long run, for the mentality and well-being of the community itself, to allow civilisation to pass it by.

To visit the gorge, we stayed at Bsharreh, the little village which is nearest to the Cedars. There are several hotels at Bsharreh, and this one, said to be the best, was run by a very amiable man (a "sheikh," which here means the head of a family) and was respectable and well kept. It was, however, infested by bugs. The air in Bsharreh is delicious, and if someone were to build a small rest-house there for the use of Europeans, it would be a perfect spot in which to spend some summer months.

The first of the many shrines of the valley that we visited was one said to exist on the cliff beside the old

road to the Cedars—for now a more practicable path has been found thither. We essayed to find it at the end of a day on the mountain higher up, and the evening was already advanced as we walked into the shadowed valley. The only indications we had of its whereabouts were vague. Time after time as we walked down the rocky path we enquired if there were an ancient shrine up on the rocks, only to be met by blank faces. No one seemed to have heard of Mar Saba, which was the name given to us by the priest who had informed us of its existence. At last we met with success.

“Mar Saba ?” said a peasant whom we asked,
“Yes, Mar Saba is up above you, up there !”

“Far ?”

“Oh, my beloved, oh my sister, oh my eyes !” (such is the endearing mountain speech), “it is very near. See, it is by the walnut trees up yonder !”

Up the steep hill-side we clambered, while he told us, since we were interested in such things, that there was a wall there, too, of great age. The sight of a gushing spring on the hill-side was grateful to our thirsty throats, and we were stooping to drink, when we were checked by the hospitable farmer, who hailed his wife left above on the hill-side, and bade her fetch a drinking vessel. At sight of a woman in man’s dress, as they considered my riding breeches, the good wife crossed herself, and then, rosary in hand, hastened off to do her man’s bidding. “Rest you here, till she comes,” said he, “for the chapel is close. My wife, who is a pious woman and always at her prayers, goes up often to the

chapel to pray, for she likes holy places. One evening when it was dark, she was saying a prayer there as her custom is, when suddenly she saw a light which issued from the ground, and rested on the chapel. Yes, miracles have been worked there. Before, in ancient times, a hermit lived here, and they brought him a young girl who was ill of cholera. He hit her on the nose, so that it bled violently, and by the power of the saint, the girl was cured."

When we reached the chapel, we found that only the foundations were left. It had been a tiny place, a mere oratory, about nine yards in width, and it was just possible to see the shape of the apse. In place of the altar, which had been ruined long ago, some pious hands had piled together a rough bethel of a few stones from the fields, and upon this stood a little oil lamp, an earthen vessel with a pinched lip at one end in which a wick floated, showing that a worshipper had visited it recently to make a vow. Nevertheless, some more utilitarian person had used the little enclosure to store onions, and the floor was littered with them. The wall, close to the chapel, was of heavy blocks of stone, and was certainly not of yesterday, but it was impossible to say definitely that it belonged to any period. Monsieur Brossé—who accompanied me, and has made a special study of these Qadisha sanctuaries—would not commit himself. It might be Byzantine, or it might be much later work, since there was nothing to date it.

We sat down by the ruined chapel awhile and talked to the owner of the vineyard, who was an intelligent man.

He told us that in ancient times, he had heard, there were great wells near by, in the rocks, and that the armies of Babylon and Egypt used to come by way of the gorge in order to water at the wells. But because the soldiers destroyed the crops as they went, the people of the villages around filled up the wells with stones. Monsieur Brossé thought that he must mean some Roman cisterns found in the neighbouring hills. However anachronistic the story, as far as the wells are concerned, it does prove that there is a definite tradition that the route by which the armies of the Assyrian kings marched into Syria was through the Qadisha gorge, which is a likely enough route. Of actual records of the Assyrians there are none save the cuneiform inscriptions above the village of Qasa in the Wadi Brissa, and the better-known inscriptions on the rocks at the mouth of the Dog River near Beirut, and these make no mention of the route taken by the armies, so that this story of the passage of the Assyrian troops lingering still amongst the people of the valley is not without value.

We asked about the large wooden cross which was visible against the sky on the peaks opposite the head of the gorge.

"That," said our host, "is Harf es Salib. Once a lioness (*lebwa*)—a monster from the sea—came up the valley and devoured children. So the people made a cross and set it up, and the monster kept away. Beneath there is a holy grotto—of St. Anthony."

What was the origin of this story? Was it a fanciful representation of foreign invaders—of armies of blood-

shedding Moslems ; or is it the old, old legend which lingered at Jaffa as the story of Perseus and Andromeda, and in Beyrut as St. George and the Dragon ? Here, at any rate, the sea-monster is still exorcised by the cross above the holy gorge.

The next morning we set off for Saidat ad Darr (Our Lady of Milk).^{*} We climbed up to it by a goat path, for it lies a few hundred feet above the road to Ehden. It is a small grotto chapel decorated by wall-paintings in tempera, and the existing masonry is probably thirteenth or fourteenth century. These mural paintings in the chapels of the Qadisha are of great value and interest. Monsieur Brossé was the first archæologist to discover them, and, being an artist as well, he is copying many of them in order to illustrate a book on the subject which he purposes to write when he has time. The walls of the chapels were prepared to receive the paintings by being plastered all over with a fine, impervious plaster, of so clean and hard a surface that where the paintings have been left untampered with the colours have been well preserved in spite of damp and weather. Sometimes fresh coats of plaster have been added, covering what was beneath, sometimes whitewash has obliterated the decoration.

In Saidat ad Darr the hand of the whitewasher has been busy, and of the original paintings there remain only those behind the south altar and in a second grotto leading out of the first. Like all these

^{*} Literally, "copious flow of milk."



Woman devotee at Chapel of Saidat ad Darr : Qadisha Valley.



Atshit : Rock Chapel of Mar Antun Bedawi (Qadisha Valley).

paintings, they are Byzantine in character, proving that art in the Holy Valley remained stationary for many hundreds of years. The subject of that behind the south altar is that of the Baptism of Christ, who is represented as standing in the Jordan while St. John pours the baptismal water over him, while figures on either side hold out their robes as if to screen the ceremony from the profane. Fishes gaze up at the Saviour from the water. The background of the whole is blue, faded with time, but the rest is mostly in ochres and yellows. The paintings in the inner grotto, possibly a cell, are better preserved, and represent saints—one St. Celamone with a child, and another, just by the entrance, wears armour and may be St. George.

In the rock floor of the chapel a piscina was cut. A third grotto, unpainted, may have been used as a living cell like the other. The north altar was evidently the one used for devotion to-day, and upon it was a poor little picture of the Virgin suckling the infant Jesus, a cheap, torn scarf draped round the picture, and a *mendil* or muslin headkerchief with crochettèd edging; the offerings of poor peasant women who had come to implore the Virgin to increase their flow of milk, for this shrine is frequented by nursing mothers. Other signs of devotion were three tins full of dead flowers (one bearing the label "Cham-pignons au naturel") and burnt-out lamps. Monsieur Brossé set to work making measurements and sketches of the paintings, while I idled outside in the shade of a couple of olive trees. Peasant women, ragged of attire,

came up with their children to talk and to offer me grapes. I amused myself with asking the names of the three varieties they brought: the white were "she-cat's teat" and "moonlight," and the black "kohol al ainab," *kohol* being the cosmetic with which belles in these countries blacken their eyes. One woman asked me if I knew English, and finding that I was English immediately broke into broad American. "Yes, sir, I been in America. I like the English, sure. This country no good: too much work!"

She pressed me to come up to her house—a stone cabin a little further up the hill by a spring. I went with them, curious to see whether her sojourn in America had at all altered her mode of living. It certainly had not reformed her appearance, for she and her three children, with their tousled hair and torn garments, were as dirty as they could be. The house consisted of two rooms, both windowless. In one the sheep and goats were herded. In the other a ledge of rock served as a wine-press and as a bed. A hole was pierced at the depression at one end to let the grape juice run through, and on the ground was a huge stone weight for pressing the fruit. Upon this Bacchanal couch, in which the whole family slept at night, a few ragged garments were spread. A single pot did for cooking, and drinking and eating. Other utensils there were none, and for fire there were a few charred sticks upon the ground. The clothes the children wore were those they slept in, for nights in the mountains were chilly. I do not think that life could be reduced into terms of greater simplicity. She brought me, in

her hospitality, cobs of corn plucked from the neighbouring terrace for refreshment, and pressed me to rest upon the wine-press-bed. The while she discoursed of America, of the good life she had led there, of the cinemas there, of the richness of the people, of the ease and light work. Alas ! she lamented, she could never go back now, because of the new regulations in America about immigrants.

Close to Bsharreh is another grotto chapel, called Mar Mama, which we had been told contained paintings, and later in the day we scrambled up to it by a steep and difficult path, sometimes climbing over the terraces of vineyards, sometimes mounting over walls. It lies high above the road, not far from the easier path leading to the popular shrine of Mar Sarkis (St. Sergius). The woman who showed us the way was afraid to come with us "because of the serpents," and indeed, when we had climbed into the precincts of the ruined place, we saw the sloughs of many large serpents lying in the grass—good, said my Syrian companion, for the eyes, if the snake-skin be pressed against the lids ; moreover, a piece of snake-skin laid between the pages of a book will preserve it from book-mites. But the chapel was disappointing, for the traces of paintings, crude in themselves, had all but disappeared from the vaulted roof and the rocky walls. It is part masonry and part natural cavern, and, like most of these rock sanctuaries, is imperfectly orientated. It has two naves, and in the north-east end a curious double niche in the apse, containing two altars.

Leaving my companion to make his plans and measurements, I scrambled down to the path to Mar Sarkis, which is, as I have said, one of the most popular shrines of the neighbourhood. It is not long since a Carmelite monk had a vision there, and placed an image of the Virgin in a cave which is a small Lourdes. This cave is above Mar Sarkis itself, and within it a spring gushes out on either side of the shrine. Mar Sarkis is on an ancient foundation, and consists of a church below, partly cut into the rock, and a grotto and rock passage above. It bears every mark of having been one of the earliest sanctuaries in the neighbourhood, and was probably a shrine long before Christian times on account of its wonderful spring, which, rising in the grotto of the Virgin above, rushes past the church and down the path to meet the pilgrim. It was growing dark, and I was not able to see as much as I wanted, in spite of the water which, the little boy who took me through the grottoes explained, had miraculous properties for the eyes.

The convent to which we walked the next day was one of the most famous of the valley, but has fallen upon evil days. It is that of Mar Lisha and lies far down in the gorge reached by stony paths from the road above. It is a vast cavern in the side of the precipice, into which chapels were built, nest-like, and the cells of the monks. Once it contained twenty or thirty monks, and its name became known beyond Syria for a while because, during the reign of Louis XV of France, one De Chasteuil, a French gentleman of

birth and learning, came here to live as a monk and die of his austerities. What drew this French aristocrat to this remote and gloomy valley in a distant land, so far from the luxurious court he had graced ?

We were received at the entrance of the monastery by the solitary who lives there, never leaving it, winter or summer. The local name for a hermit is "habbis"—one who is immured, and the profession is still followed in the valley of the Qadisha. Only the evening before, our host of the inn at Bsharreh told us of another hermit who lives in the mountains by the village, "a learned man, who reads many books." We made enquiries about this hermit, who, it appeared, descended sometimes into the village to preach at one of its many churches. He would not receive a woman, I was told, for he regarded women as altogether of the Devil, and sometimes, meeting a girl on his way whose skirt was too short for his offended sense of morals, he would take his staff and belabour her. Not long ago, he set upon two women in Bsharreh who wore French dresses, and found that he had met his match in one of them, for she seized him by the beard, and pulled it until he made off.

I was afraid that the hermit of Mar Lisha might prove just such another misogynist, but he received us with the utmost courtesy. He had been a Maronite priest, but had left his fellow-men nearly a year ago to pass his days in holy exercises until death overtook him in this forsaken eyrie. His black habit was soiled, and his face pale from immurement ; moreover—truth in all things—he was unsavoury. I suppose that

washing is a forsworn luxury. He was forty-odd years of age, but looked much younger. With arms devoutly folded, he took us over the small church, the rock chapels, and into the empty cells of long dead brethren. Yes, the French saint was buried somewhere here, he said, but he had not a clear idea where, though miracles had been worked at the tomb in times past. There was a tradition that he had been buried sitting in a chair behind the great altar, but another story placed the tomb in a chapel. The eighth or ninth century church which the present structure of Mar Lisha replaced is exceedingly difficult to trace. There are the remains of plaster everywhere on the smoke-blackened rock, but of the original masonry very little.

While we rested on chairs which the hermit brought us, I questioned him as to his mode of life. Did he never go out? No, never. His food was brought to him by peasants near by—a little bread and fruit was all that he needed. In winter, was it not very cold in the damp sunlessness of the cavern? Did he not make himself a fire? “I have given up the luxuries of the world,” was his simple reply. Did he read, or study? He had a few books—lives of the saints and the “Imitation of Christ,” and these were his only mental food. Otherwise his occupation was prayer and meditation. The blue eyes in his anæmic face were kindly and childish: I thought he might have made an excellent husband to some peasant woman of the hills. He took my heretic questioning in good part, and as I rose to go, beckoned me aside. His living cell door stood ajar, and, entering, he opened a wooden box, and took out a small cardboard

box from its emptiness. This, with an air of hospitable importance, he opened and held out to me. It contained a few chocolates, wrapped in silver paper. Some relative or kindly-disposed person had sent them to him as an offering. To have refused would have hurt his feelings, but I hated robbing him of one of his few remaining small joys of the flesh.

"I keep them for visitors," he explained, apologetically.

The path which we followed on the side of the gorge was very beautiful. The noise of many waters is always heard in the Holy Valley ; below the Qadisha brawls its way towards Tripoli, above and around cascades and springs leap and splash day and night. The voice of the water, the eternal whisper of the wind in the trees, like rustling of the feathery pinions of angel hosts, and the chirping of goldfinches and bulbuls, these prevent there ever being silence here. One would have thought that meditation in such a place would have made mystics, but the saints and hermits here are for the most of one pattern, and do all the conventional things which saints and hermits have done from the beginning. Their piety leads them to platitudinous visions of the Virgin or the saints, never to glimpses of the Supreme like the little poor man of Assisi.

The way was shaded by aromatic thuja trees. This part of the valley is called the Huat al Haj Faris, and hundreds of feet above, at the top of the precipice, there is a fine natural bridge through which a cascade of water foams and falls. We sat beside it for a moment

to rest, and gathered cress among the stones. Ragwort, feverfew, water-mint, and a number of sweet-smelling herbs grow here in abundance, and, from the great boulders through which the water falls like silver, hang masses of maidenhair fern, which the Syrians call *qisbirt al bir*. A yard from our halting-place the water took another five hundred feet leap down the precipice. Up the mountain-side, a stiff climb through thistles and furze and rocks brought us to another grotto chapel, Bshmuni, or Mar Shimun, sometimes called Tshimli. This tiny chapel, like Mar Mama, has two naves, one ending in and narrowed by the formation of the cave, and each containing altars and primitive paintings. The altars in these cave-chapels are mostly of exactly the same type as the pagan altar, and it is usual to find a small opening beneath them in which, during times of stress and danger, people can thrust their valuables, concealing them with a stone. They are commonly built of a few blocks of stone, so that an extra block pushed in would conceal the opening completely.

The paintings in Mar Shimun were extremely interesting, though partially obliterated. In the smaller apse a personage—probably Christ—is represented as treading on a carpet upon which are portrayed the chained, prostrate figure of a man, emblems of torture, and a child. The personage holds the hand of a saint. In the smaller apses the paintings are much destroyed. The division of the church into naves is evidently modern, for the wall cuts into a portion of the ancient painting. All but inaccessible, as are all these rock

chapels of the Qadisha, they have constant pilgrims, and the ugly result is that the altars are strewn with empty beer and wine bottles and empty boxes of matches. The bottles contained oil for the lamps, and here in Mar Shimun I found a primitive earthen lamp which had but recently burned itself out. Each chapel has a reputation for curing some sort of malady, and peasants will travel far to one of these deserted shrines in the hope of getting cured, or to make a vow for the cure of another. This chapel was lighted only by the door, an opening in the masonry of the south end, and a hole in the rock at the west end. From underneath the two oak trees which stand sentinel outside Mar Shimun, there is a wonderful view of the precipitous gorge beneath, looking on the one side towards the head of the valley and the Cedars, and further down the ravine to the Maronite Patriarch's summer residence perched loftily above in the sunshine at Bdiman.

The next grotto we visited was one of the most interesting in the whole valley—Deir es Salib, but for a time we hesitated to attempt it from this point, as the goat path which we were following becomes difficult and, to the novice, dangerous. However, both my companions were accustomed to mountains, and though they warned me that if I were subject to vertigo I had better attempt it from another point, I resolved on the shorter way. The only really bad part was a narrow ledge of rock upon which there was slight foothold, with a drop of many hundreds of feet below, but it was

negotiated without much difficulty; indeed, I had found some of the steep and slippery paths up which we had climbed before a good deal more insecure of footing. I should not advise anyone to go to these chapels alone or unaccompanied by a peasant of the district, as an accident might be serious, and days might elapse before help came.

Just after we had passed the worst corner, our Lebanese, whose name was Jirius, told us that there was another chapel higher up, dedicated to his patron saint, Mar Jirius (George). We climbed up a slippery slope covered with bushes, and found the grotto, as he had said, in the rocks above. Possibly, at some time, a hermit had inhabited it, or a saint had been buried there, but nothing of interest remained but rows of skulls, and many bones, many of them small. Some two or three broken coffins, also of small size, lay on the floor. It appears that it is a favourite place of burial, especially for children, but why, and the history of the grotto, I was unable to find out.

Following the bend of the rock, we soon joined the mule path below Deir es Salib, a vast cavern containing a ruined monastery and chapel, which is visible from the carriage road to Ehden. Before beginning the ascent of it, we stopped by a rushing waterfall beneath some olive trees to eat our lunch, buying grapes from a woman who passed on the mule path. This part of the gorge is thickly grown with big walnut trees and olives, and the boulders in the shade of which we sat were larger than the stones of Stonehenge.

The recluses of Deir es Salib (the Monastery of the



Deir as Salib: Qadisha Valley.



Rock Chapel of Deir as Salib, below Atshit (Qadisha Valley).

Cross) had been evidently determined not to encourage visitors, as it is a piece of difficult climbing to gain access to it. Perhaps at some time there were steps ; but these, if they existed, have long since disappeared, and one has to cling to rocks and skirt ravines in order to get into the place. The ruined arch which stands at the entrance is detached from what remains of the monastery, but the little chapel is fairly intact, though roofless and much damaged. The whole place, like Mar Lisha, is built into the big natural cavern. The paintings are certainly the finest of all, though not so primitive of character, with the exception of the Crucifixion on one of the pillars. They are much destroyed, and even now pilgrims to the shrine, and small boys, amuse themselves by picking off the paintings. The church has two naves. In the middle of one apse the hand of the Madonna, uplifted in blessing, is all that remains. There is also St. Barbara, wearing an elaborate robe, and in the Annunciation to the left of the apse there is a really beautiful angel, in good preservation, as well as half the face of the Virgin. In the second nave are paintings of the four Evangelists and a fourth saint, possibly St. Paul. The Crucifixion, to which I have referred, is evidently older than these paintings, and is mostly in red ochre, with the sun and moon on either side of the cross, two saints standing below the Saviour and crude Syriac inscriptions beneath all but obliterated. With the aid of a wet sponge, Monsieur Brossé copied these in order to have them deciphered by an epigraphist.

The cavern in which this chapel was built has several

sub-grottoes, and from signs of masonry must have contained the cells of the monks. Several of the smaller caves contained bones, one near the entrance being full of skulls. I examined some of them, which were of varying types: here the low frontal bone and high cheek bones of some peasant, there a thick skull that might have belonged to one of Borrow's Danes, there an abnormally big skull that might have contained the brain of either a genius or an idiot. If the shrine is reached by a path on which a single false step would send the pilgrim hurtling down into the gorge to be dashed to pieces on the rocks beneath, the cavern itself is on the edge of a sheer precipice, to look down which gives one a sensation of vertigo. The rock is of a reddish colour, and the whole place, according to the aneroid barometer, twelve hundred metres above sea-level.

The usual empty beer-bottles and other mess proved that this lonely shrine is still much used by pilgrims; but Jirius, who was well versed in the miracle lore of the valley, had no particular virtue to ascribe to the shrine, though it receives especial honour at the Feast of the Cross.

Finding him so full of the miraculous, I asked him if there were any jinns in the valley of the Qadisha. His answer was curious.

"There are no jinns here because there are wolves."

"Why do wolves keep jinns away?"

"Because wolves are angels!"

But seeing that our interest was unduly awakened by this statement, he vouchsafed nothing more. It

is always better not to show surprise at any statement made by these people if one wishes to draw out the folk-lore of which they are full. I was able to elicit from Jirius a little later that, though jinns had left the valley, there are tawabia—*تَوَابِيَا* ("those who follow,")—who haunt springs and rivers. These spirits of the streams leave a little liquid in vessels put within their reach, and if the man who finds this touches his forehead with the magic fluid, a ram instantly appears. If he has the courage to mount the ram, it will immediately take him to "Sind and Hind." But such courses are extremely reprehensible from the standpoint of the pious. Indeed, the priests take a strong line about magic, whether white, black, or of the kind served up by Maskelyne and Devant. A conjurer came recently to Bsharreh, said Jirius, and worked wonders. Thereupon one of the priests accused him of sorcery—Jirius said simony—and had him chased from the village. From sorcerers, we passed to the evil eye. At one time, a blue-eyed person was thought to have the evil eye, said Jirius, but here in the mountains, so many have blue eyes that it is known not to be true. But the real cause of the evil eye is that some children have the misfortune to be born in the dark of the moon. Then assuredly they have the evil eye.*

From this we came to speak of the idol of Atshit,

* Cp. Thomas Hardy's "The Return of the Native":

"Yes, 'no moon, no man.' 'Tis one of the truest sayings ever spit out. The boy never comes to anything that's born at new moon."

the village towards which, when Monsieur Brossé had finished his sketch, we should climb anon.

Yes, said Jirius, there is an idol up there at Atshit. Once it stood upright, and in the direction to which it looked there was trouble. Crops did not ripen, or the harvest was blasted. So when they made the church, they cast down the idol and cut off its head, and buried it under the church.

“ And is it still there ? ”

“ The body of the idol is still there up beside the church.”

As we climbed up to Atshit* by a steep mule path which twisted about the face of the rocky precipice, I asked Monsieur Brossé about the idol, and he laughed.

“ Yes,” he said, “ and I nearly brought misfortune on the village once by turning the idol round in order to photograph it. It is a poorly executed statue of a Roman notable, and it lies up beside the church of the village ; I’ll show it to you ! ”

Accordingly when, hot and weary, we at last reached the village above, we sought the idol while the village children stood about and volunteered information. The statue, a toga-clad figure, had been rolled over again, front downwards, in order to safeguard the church, which might fall if the idol looked towards it. As for its head, it was buried, so the crops were safe.

We had one other day’s pilgrimage in the valley, though by then we had not seen all the shrines which the gorge shelters. At seven in the morning we started

* Meaning “ side of the rock.”



Mural paintings at Deir as Salib (Qadisha Valley).



Hasrun : Qadisha Valley.

for Atshit—the village of the idol—and avoiding the houses, descended beside it into the gorge through the Wadi al Kabir, to the bridge over a mountain torrent at Sharakhfita. Shortly after leaving the bridge, a precipitous but not difficult ascent to the left brings one to Mar Yuhanna, a cave walled up so as to form a small chapel. But the hand of the whitewasher has been busy in this chapel, and of painting and decoration there is hardly a trace. Here there is but one apse and altar. A sepulchral cave opens into the north side of the chapel, and lying on altar and floor is the usual pious untidiness of beer and vinegar bottles, spilt oil and candle grease. The length of the whole chapel is roughly seven yards. Upon the altar is a cheap oleograph of the infant St. John, draped with a dirty kerchief and a strip of printed cloth. Outside, a double arch protects the entrance, and rough steps lead to an upper grotto, probably also a shrine but now destroyed. Bones protrude from a rock sepulchre near the entrance to the chapel, which no doubt had once a great vogue.

From Mar Yuhanna to Qannubin there is a more or less easy path along the side of the gorge, and one which it would be worth while traversing if only for its wild beauty. Towards mid-day, however, the sun was full on it, in all its summer strength, and the way seemed long. Below, the bottom of the gorge is full of poplars, figs, walnuts and oaks, but the rocky path above is more or less shadeless. The pine trees of Qannubin showed at last on the edge of a distant rock, climbing processionally towards the top, and then we

followed a precipitous and barren path to the most celebrated monastery of the gorge, the home of the Maronite patriarchs for many hundreds of years. It is enthroned majestically on an airy perch above the lower gorge, and its arcades and mellow stones reward and refresh the eye. Just below the monastery, on the steep track which ends abruptly at the gate, there is a fountain, a clear stream gushing out of the rock, and here, slaking the thirst engendered by the mid-day sun, we drank copiously before entering the monastery. In these days only two monks remain in it, but the place is well kept and in good repair. The church itself is a grotto, entirely in the rock, and much bigger than the tiny rock chapels we had been visiting. The roof has been shaped so as to form a pointed vault, and there is a single altar with apsidal niches on either side.

The most striking feature as one enters, is the large and curious mural painting on the north wall representing the Coronation of the Virgin by God the Father and God the Son, both wearing haloes of triangular shape. The Holy Dove hovers above the Virgin's head, and on either side are the sun and moon. At her feet the high altar of the church of Qannubin is represented, and the pines which surround the monastery. Beneath this again are a number of patriarchs adoring, said by the monks to be portraits of Maronite Patriarchs, and at the sides are groups of cherubs. The age of the painting is uncertain, and it has probably been repainted since its original design. It is at most no older than the sixteenth century, and it may be later.

Over the altar is a painting of a bearded figure which seems to unite, as in some Byzantine paintings, characteristics of Two Persons of the Trinity in one. To the left is the Madonna, and to the right St. Stephen. In each of the apsidal niches are more paintings, much blackened by age and smoke, possibly of the fifteenth century.

The whole of the church and most of the buildings of Qannubin are fitted into an enormous natural arch of rock, while platforms are built out over the gorge. On one of these, under the shelter of pine-boughs laid across a wooden framework, we rested a little whilst the single brother left in charge of the convent pulled at the bell for mid-day prayer. Its melodious voice echoed and re-echoed down the gorge, and when he had done, he sat down to converse with us. A few days ago, he said, a visitor had returned to the convent to make a thank-offering for a miraculous cure. In a chest within the church, a dead bishop—whose flesh miraculously mummifying, proved his sanctity—is exhibited at times to the faithful, so that they may see and touch. The Syrian gentleman referred to was recently visiting the convent, and chanced to touch the hair of the deceased saint. His own head was bald owing to a skin disease, and no hairdresser had been able to effect cure. No sooner had he got home than his hair began to grow, and in eighty days, lo ! his head was covered all over with a fine new crop.

“Where are the patriarchs buried?” I asked. “In subterranean vaults beneath the monastery?”

“No,” he returned. “There are caves beneath

the church, in which the monks once sheltered when the Metawilehs sacked the convent, but these are now closed up. The patriarchs were not buried there, but further up the rock, in the grotto of St. Marina, where, as you see, a new chapel has recently been built."

I asked who Saint Marina was, and as she was a Lebanese saint, I give her history as he gave it, though it may be found in various hagiologies.

A certain man who lived in Kalamun, near Tripoli, in the eighth century after Christ, lost a wife to whom he was very much devoted. In his grief, he gave his little daughter Marina to relatives, and betook himself to the monastery of Qannubin in the Qadisha, where he took vows and became a monk. His life was exemplary, but instead of the holy gladness which should have illumined his countenance, deep melancholy sat there. The Superior of the convent spoke to him one day about his gloom, and asked him what secret grief marred the joy of his saintly life. Then the monk opened his heart.

"I fear," said he, "lest in leaving the world, I should have unthinkingly abandoned some of the duties laid upon me by heaven. When I entered this convent, with selfish lack of thought I left behind me an only child. The heaviness that troubles me comes from the fear that my child will not be brought up in the true religion, and that I am unable to fulfil my fatherly duties to the soul for whose existence and care I am responsible before God."

Instead of blaming the brother, the superior praised him.

“The anxiety which moves you is of a heavenly origin,” said he. “But there is a remedy. Bring your child here, and we will educate him in the convent and bring him up in the fear of God.”

The father of Marina did not dare to correct the error of the Superior, knowing that a girl would not be admitted into the convent. He went to Kalamun to fetch her, dressed her as a boy, and brought her to Qannubin. Here the child was taught the principles of the Christian faith, and before long, the piety and learning of the young Marinus, as “he” was called, were the wonder of the place. It is said that “his” modesty was so extreme and his gaze so constantly fixed upon the ground that the brothers did not know the colour of his eyes. In due time he took his vows and none guessed that he was not the youth that he pretended to be, and the father, who had kept the secret, died.

One day, the Superior had occasion to send two monks on an errand to a small village called Terza, across the gorge. He sent Brother Marinus, accompanied by another monk. The two holy men put up for the night at the house of a good man who offered them hospitality, and were kindly entertained by him and his pretty daughter. Some months later, this man appeared at the convent in a terrible state of mind. His daughter was pregnant, and as partner in the sin she had committed she accused one of the brothers who had been entertained by her father, the saintly young Brother Marinus. The Superior was much shocked at the good man’s tale, and questioned

Brother Marinus, who showed confusion and refused to clear himself. Therefore, Brother Marinus was dismissed from the convent with ignominy.

The falsely accused "brother" did not return to her family, but went into the cave above the monastery and took up the life of a hermit. Presently, the father of the girl who had been seduced arrived with the baby in his arms at the Convent door. The scandalised Superior had it placed at the entrance to Brother Marinus's retreat.

Marina was woman enough, in spite of her masquerade, to take pity on the baby, and taking it into her cell, she tried to nourish it at her bosom, into which milk began miraculously to flow. Seeing the baby nourished, tales gradually spread of the sanctity of the young hermit, and one night a beautiful light stood about the grotto which "he" inhabited. Awed, the brethren entered the cave to find the hermit dead. When they prepared the body for burial, the anchorite was discovered to be a woman. Miracles soon began to be performed at the grotto, and to this day, women whose supply of milk is diminishing or failing, come to demand help of Santa Marina, whose heart of pity enabled her to feed the foundling from her virgin bosom.

A few miles below Qannubin* is another shrine—

* Maundrell says: "*Canobine* . . . is a very mean structure ; but its situation is admirably adapted for Retirement and Devotion. For there is a very deep rupture in the side of Libanus, running at least seven hours' travel directly up into the Mountain. It is

that of Mar Antonius Qozhayya. I had hoped to visit this, but the day was advanced and we had at least an hour's climb to the top of the gorge before we could reach the carriage road. The church was only built in 1732, near a cave where St. Anthony is supposed to have slept, but it has a reputation worthy of the gorge, and I should have liked to have seen it. I questioned the brother about it.

He said that I had been correctly informed. Those possessed of devils were taken to the cave, and there,

on both sides exceeding steep and high, cloath'd with fragrant Greens from top to bottom, and everywhere refresh'd with Fountains, falling down from the Rocks in pleasant Cascades : the ingenious work of Nature. These Streams, all uniting at the bottom, make a full and rapid Torrent, whose agreeable murmuring is heard all over the place, and adds no small pleasure to it. *Canobine* is seated on the North side of this Chasm, on the steep of the Mountain, at about midway between the top and the bottom. It stands at the mouth of a great Cave, having a few small Rooms fronting outward, that enjoy the light of the Sun ; the rest are all under ground. It had for its Founder the Emperour Theodosius the Great. And tho' it has been several times rebuilt, yet the Patriarch assur'd me, the Church was of the primitive Foundation. But, whoever built it, it is a mean Fabrick, and no great Credit to its Founder. It stands in the Grot, but fronting outwards receives a little light from that side. In the same side there were also hanged from the Wall two small Bells, to call the Monks to their Devotions. A privilege allow'd no where else in this Country ; nor would they be suffer'd here, but that the Turks are far enough off from the hearing of them. The Valley of *Canobine* (the Qadisha, E. S. S.) was anciently (as it well deserves) very much resorted to for religious retirement. You see here still Hermitages, Cells, Monasteries, almost without number. There is not any little part of Rock that jets out upon the side of the Mountain, but you generally see some little Structure upon it, for the reception of Monks and Hermits ; tho' few or none of them are now Inhabited."

irrespective of sex, were immured for periods varying from a few hours to a month. The treatment was to place an iron collar round the neck of the victim and chain him up inside the cave, first branding him on the skull with a red-hot iron in the shape of a cross. Should the devil resist exorcism, the patient remained, being fed only with bread and water (once the holy water which dripped from the cave roof was all that was allowed). If at the end of thirty days the patient was neither cured nor dead, he was released, it having been definitely proved that he was not possessed of a devil, but was suffering from illness.

"Do many die?" I asked.

"Yes, many die," he replied.

Later on, when I returned to Beyrut, I asked a doctor from the mental hospital at Asfuriyeh if he could corroborate this story in any way. He replied that not only could he corroborate it, but if I cared to come to the hospital one day, he could show me a patient whose scalp was scarred in the form of a cross who had but recently emerged from this cave. Often his patients are removed by relatives to be sent to Qozhayya, and when that fails return again for treatment. But patients who have been through the Qozhayya "cure" are never known to recover their wits, and are usually past all hope when they emerge.*

While I was listening to the good monk of Qannubin, I noticed that one of our companions, a young Syrian

* When passing again through Syria this spring I saw several mental patients thus branded.



The "idol" of Atshit (Qadisha Valley).



Mental patient from Qozhayya : showing cross branded on the skull.

of good family who had recently graduated with honours at the Jesuit University of Beirut, listened with much attention to the story. He turned to me at the end of the recital. "He says there are many miraculous cures," said he seriously, and one saw that all his University training had not resulted in destroying his faith in the possible benefits of a cave of Qozhayya. And this is precisely where the education of the good fathers, useful and beneficial though it is, fails. Too tender of anything which may endanger the faith of their pupils, the result at long last is a young man who, though he has passed high in the study of rhetoric and mathematics, nevertheless may still have a lurking belief in the miracles of Qozhayya.

I followed the southern side of the valley on my way to the Cedars, and the carriage road led us somewhat out of the gorge, to Amiun, which nevertheless belongs to the Qadisha, because of the similarity of the paintings in the church of St. Phocas to the paintings in the Sacred Valley.

One turns into this road from the coast, near Shekka, passing the higher Shekka which is now a deserted village. (Its inhabitants fled in panic during the last century because of an earthquake and never returned.) The road, up-hill from the coast, is at first very barren, white and chalky. In the summer sun the glare is terrific, and must cause much ophthalmia. Still, even in this unpromising soil, the hills are terraced for barley crops, since nothing defeats the industrious courage of the peasants.

Beyond the first great ridge a little green comes to relieve the long aridity, and before descending into the fertile valley of the Kura, a grotto may be noticed to the left on the face of a small hill, containing Roman-Phœnician tombs. The Kura is a big tableland full of olive-trees and cultivation, where there are orchards, irrigation, and a quantity of small but prosperous villages, and everywhere the sleek black cattle that tell of good feeding.

Amiun lies beyond the Kura, and has a church unique in Syria for picturesqueness of situation. It is the modern church of St. John the Beloved (Mar Yuhanna al Habib), and is perched fantastically on a high pinnacle of rock, one face of which is honey-combed by tombs. It is said that the church is built on the foundations of an ancient temple. But the church of real interest at Amiun is the ancient church of St. Phocas, built originally in the ninth or tenth century, the time when so many of the sanctuaries of the Qadisha were founded, the present structure being probably built in the time of the Crusaders. It is just being restored by a Syrian benefactor, and, after being in a ruined condition for many years, will be used again for worship. It is decorated by paintings in tempera like the paintings of the Qadisha chapels. The church is of the simple basilica type, and the arch of the apse over the main altar is slightly stilted, showing Saracen influence. At the eastern end of the north nave there is an apsidal niche. The original south end of the church has evidently been rebuilt at some time, thus shortening the length of the building.

The best painting is that in the apse, representing Adam, Eve and Abel, together with Solomon, David, and St. John the Baptist coming out of an open tomb and gazing at the risen Christ, of whom only the robe and a portion of the head are still visible. There is an encircling border of the sacred vine, and traces of the twelve Apostles beneath. On the north wall, roof, and columns of the naves are also paintings and traces of colour, but it is sometimes difficult to recognise the subjects, so much have they been destroyed. On one column the head of Christ appears, on another there is a "Baptism of Christ" which much resembles the Baptism in the chapel of Saidat ad Durr to the north of the Qadisha Valley. Christ is standing in the water while angels reverently hold his clothes, and fishes surround his feet. On another there is a figure of Phocas himself. In the process of restoration these paintings have suffered a little, and the church, originally Maronite, is now to become Greek Orthodox.

Two more Crusaders' chapels are visible as one leaves Amiun ; the chapel of Mar Nura (a Persian saint martyred at Batrun) to the right on a hill, and that of St. Barbe on the left. The latter saint is the patron of electric light, bombs and explosives, because she was at one time miraculously delivered from her persecutors by lightning from heaven. The road now winds along the valley of the Qadisha, and as the car climbs ever higher and higher, following the serpentine convolutions of the road, the holy valley beneath lies like a broad dark gash between the ranges, thousands of

feet deep. I should have liked to have stopped in order to visit the monastery of Amatura in the gorge, which stands in a curious amphitheatre of barren rock. It is scooped out in such a way that the monastery looks like a small pearl clinging to the interior of an oyster, the cliff being ribbed by the conformation of the strata in such a way that it is curved and corrugated like a huge shell. Indeed, everything in this gorge and the mountains which surround it speaks of mighty upheavals and rendings asunder of some period in the earth's history when all was chaos and destruction.

But to reach Amatura would have been a matter of several hours and difficult at that, so that we kept to our way, following the course of the gorge. The grandeur of the barren mountains climbing into the sky above, grey, immense, and cold, is crowned by the lofty summits of the peaks above the Cedars mountain, and the small, insignificant dark blotch which is the first distant glimpse of the Cedars themselves.

The highest point to which the car climbs on this southern road is reached at Hadet, and close to the village there are some rock tombs of the usual type ; the square, low entrance and loculi within. These are to be seen a little to the left of the road at a spot known as the " Place of Battles " on account of the red colour of the rock. Local tradition has it that here, in the days of the Crusaders, a bloody battle was fought between Saracen and Christian, and that since that day the rocks have been stained.

Bdiman, the summer residence of his Holiness the



Sepulchral grotto below carriage road at Hadet.



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Waterfall : Bsharreh (Qadisha Valley).

Maronite Patriarch, lies off the road to the left, overhanging the gorge, and surely no prince of the church ever had a lovelier palace. The big, red-roofed building stands high above the wooded ravine, and commands a view of it from north to south, while above tower the heights of North Lebanon, covered with dazzling snow for most of the year.

Shortly afterwards, passing Hasrun, a pretty red-tiled village, an aerial nest built on a spur above the gorge, the head of the Qadisha valley is crossed and Bsharreh reached a little later, whence a continuation of the road, passing Ehden, goes down to Tripoli. Thus it is possible to encircle the whole gorge by car if one wishes ; but to see its secrets, and to know its people, to visit its sanctuaries, and hear of its saints one must descend into the steeps of that gloomy chine, fed by many waters, and traverse its rocky paths on foot. And, most assuredly, there is no other worthy way of making a pilgrimage into the Middle Ages.

CHAPTER XI

. . . AND SO TO TRIPOLI

TARABULUS, Tripoli—name bound up with the annals of chivalry and romance ! It was to Tripoli that Friar Bacon's servant, Miles, sent his familiar spirit for "a fat capon and bread with it" from the King of Tripoli's own table. It was to Tripoli that the romantic fancy of Jaufré Rudel turned in search of his Princess Far Away—the lady Melissand. It was Tripoli that withstood the assaults and instruments of siege brought against it by the Crusaders for six long years ; it was Tripoli's famous library with its priceless manuscripts that fell victim to their avenging fury when at last they entered the city, sword and torch in hand. Tripoli, the Counts of Tripoli, the Castle of Mont Pèlerin or Saint Gilles, these are words of incantation which summon up scene after scene, story after story in the pageant of the Franks in Syria.

The tale of Jaufré Rudel and of the Princess Far Away—what was it ? Rostand's song, so delightfully translated by Alfred Noyes, voices the yearning for

distant joys of which this charming romance was born.

Oh, many a lover sighs
Beneath the Summer skies
For black or hazel eyes
All day ;
No light of hope can mar
My whiter, brighter star ;
I love a Princess far
Away.

The authors of a recent book,* " Le Chemin de Damas," have retold the story so well that I must quote from them.

" There was once in the district of Blaye, a certain Jaufré Rudel who became enamoured of a lady whose husband lived in a distant castle, in such sort that the unfortunate lover could not hope for her except in dreams. Following an adventure which one guesses to have been prosaic enough—a beating, I think—he was cured of his human passion, and thenceforward, in his songs, his only desire was to celebrate an ideal being, born entirely of his own spirit.

" *When the days are long in the month of May, the songs of distant birds delight me, and when I have ceased to hear, they speak to me of a distant love. I go then, thoughtful, gloomy and with head bent, and song of bird and scent of hawthorn please me no better than icy winter. . . . But who knows when I shall see my love, for our countries are distant, and 'twixt here and there is many a weary league. As God wills ! If I may not enjoy this*

* Le Chemin de Damas : Jérôme et Jean Tharaud : Libraire Plon.

distant love, I will enjoy none other, for lady nobler and better I know not, neither near nor far. Her worth is so pure and perfect that for her sake I would be called captive, far away, in the land of the Saracen. May God, who created all that comes and goes, accord me this far-away love, and, be our habitation never so simple and plain, room and garden will seem to me a lordly palace. But that which I desire is withheld, for my godfather fated me to love without being loved again. Yea, that which I desire is denied me. Ah, cursed the godfather who fated me to love without being loved again ! ' "

Rudel went to the wars with the rest, reached the Holy Land, and died there. A certain poet, a century later, writing the lives of Provençal troubadours, found the song and the history, and welding both into one, wove a romance.

"Jaufré Rudel, Prince of Blaye," says he, "was a worthy gentleman. He became enamoured of the Countess of Tripoli, without having seen her, from the accounts which pilgrims from Antioch gave him of his lady. He composed in her honour many poems, rich in sound, poor in words. And in his desire to see her, he donned the cross and took ship. On the way he fell sick and was carried to an inn at Tripoli as one dead. He sent a messenger to the countess, and this lady came to his bedside and took him into her embrace. And when he knew that it was She, he recovered hearing and smell, and began to praise God for the mercy shown him in that life had been preserved in him until the moment of her coming. Then he died in her arms. She caused him to be interred

with great honour amongst the Templars, and the same day took the veil by reason of her great affliction at his end."

It is no story of frustrated love ; it is rather an allegory of that strange longing for the unknown, that desire of distant adventure which has always drawn men of the West to the eternal East from the earliest times until now. The Countess of Tripoli in the Castle of Mont Pèlerin, whose voice reached the lonely knight in the song of the spring birds, is the voice which is heard in many a northern May, bidding men wander to distant countries ; that instinct which found its supreme expression, under a religious guise, in the Crusades, when all Europe was seized with nostalgia for the far-away princess, dear lady held in paynim duress, fair cause for which the peasant left plough and cot and the knight domain and noble wife.

The Castle of Tripoli—Sanjil*—as the Arabs call it, still stands on Mont Pèlerin, though it has been much rebuilt since Raymond of Toulouse's day. Of the Crusaders' stronghold, little but the lower courses of masonry and the broken half-column and spring of an arch seen in the courtyard, remain. The latter is part of a chapel.

The present building is chiefly Arab and Turkish. I reached it at sundown, after it was closed, but the obliging guard, intercepted as he was leaving, took the great key from his pocket and opened the postern door beneath the lovely black and white arch of the Arab

* After Raymond, Count of St. Gilles et Toulouse.

gateway. This bears an inscription saying that it was built by Suleyman I. Just by the entrance is a mosque for soldiers of the guard, for up to quite recently (1922) it was used as a prison, and the gloomy atmosphere of captivity and despair hangs about it yet. In spite of its wide courtyard and the wonderful views from the ramparts, that impression remained with me throughout. The prisons were scarcely worthy of the name—dungeons would be the better word. In Turkish times, a prisoner who was not wealthy enough to bribe one of the gaolers to connive at and share his escape from the place, or to procure the slight ameliorations which bakshish could procure, was in a miserable plight. During the Great War, many were placed here on mere suspicion of sympathy with the Allies, soon to die of misery, fever and horror. I went through the prisons with the exception of one. The "ordinary" prisons were long, dismal corridors, unlit except by a small door at one end, and divided into pens, in which prisoners were chained like wild beasts by the leg, and only allowed out for an hour's exercise in the day. The French Government, unfortunately, found itself obliged, at first, for want of other quarters, to use these noisome dungeons, but have now made other arrangements.

The prison for those with life sentences was so appalling that I only glanced in and turned away. It was yet darker than the other dungeons, and ran back for hundreds of feet into impenetrable blackness. Here prisoners serving life sentences for political and other crimes were kept chained in filth and night

until death released them. The watchman who took us round said that few lived long. *If the Allies had not freed Syria from the Turk, these dungeons would be in use to-day*, and if France were to hand back Syria to Turkey, vengeance would immediately doom many leading Syrians to a living death here ; for prison reform has hardly kept pace with the much-vaunted progress of Young Turkey.

Maundrell, writing on May 6th, 1697, has also a gloomy picture to paint of the castle. He says :

“ In the afternoon Mr. *Consul Hastings* carry'd us to see the Castle of *Tripoli*. It is pleasantly situate on a Hill, commanding the City ; but it has neither Arms, nor Ammunition in it, and serves rather for a Prison than a Garrison. There was shut up in it at this time a poor Christian Prisoner, call'd *Sheck Eunice*,* a Maronite. He was one that had formerly renounc'd his Faith, and liv'd for many years in the Mahometan Religion. But in his declining Age, he both retracted his Apostacy, and dyed to attone for it ; For he was impal'd by the order of the Bassa two days after we left *Tripoli*. This punishment of impaling is commonly executed amongst the Turks for crimes of the highest degree ; and is certainly one of the greatest indignities and barbarities that can be offer'd to human Nature. The execution is done in this manner. They take a Post of about the biggness of a Man's Leg, and eight or nine foot long, and make it very sharp at one

* Sheikh Yunus.

end. This they lay upon the back of the Criminal, and force him to carry it to the place of Execution : Imitating herein the old Roman Custom of compelling Malefactors to bear their Cross. Being arriv'd at the fatal place, they thrust in the Stake at the Fundament of the Person, who is the miserable Subject of this doom ; and then taking him by the Legs draw his Body upon it, till the point of the Stake appears at his Shoulders. After this they erect the Stake, and fasten it in a hole dug in the ground. The Criminal sitting in this posture upon it, remains not only still alive, but also drinks, smokes, and talks, as one perfectly sensible ; and thus some have continued for twenty-four hours. But generally after the tortur'd Wretch has remained in this deplorable and ignominious posture an hour or two, someone of the Standers by is permitted to give him a gracious stab to the Heart ; so putting an end to his unexpressible misery."

As I have said, from the ramparts and turrets of the castle one has wonderful "prospects" (as Maundrell would say) of the three towns ; furthest being the white houses of Al Mina, the port, running out into the blue sea and divided from the main city by thick, dark groves of bananas, swampy ground green with rushes, and orchards of almond trees. The town proper has a far more Oriental appearance than most towns of the coast, with its flat roofs, domes and minarets. As yet there are few tiled roofs, and from the scenic point of view this is an advantage. The third town lies on and beyond the Nahr Abu Ali, as the Qadisha is named

here, and from the castle I saw by the yellow light of the setting sun a number of naked boys bathing in the summer-shrunken river, their shouts of joy rising to us as they plunged and played beneath the trees.

The paved road up to the castle has a mediæval appearance with its arches above the street, and indeed, the whole town is not of to-day. The main street, with its hotel and cafés, public garden and trams—drawn by mules!—has an entirely fictitious air of modernity. But, turn off into the side-streets and you are again with Saracen emirs and Christian knights. The colour of Tripoli, the deep shadows, the brilliant splashes of colour and light, the ancient arches, the tall water-towers overgrown with moss and maiden-hair fern, the booths filled with multi-coloured fruits and fabrics of Eastern dye, remind one of Sidon; but the more northern city has an even intensified charm. Here the water-seller clinks his brass cup all the summer day, his apparatus a wonder of bright brass and inlaid silver, all tinkling with dangling ornaments. Here the fortune-teller wanders, here the coffee-shop boy wields his long-handled coffee-pot full of sweet, thick coffee, attentive to the needs of the customers, here the drone of a Quran school issues from an open doorway, or there sounds aloft the high, devout call of the muezzin.

One of the loveliest things in Tripoli is the Mosque of Tailan, reached through a Moslem cemetery, a place of great resort, for it is a green and delightful acre shaded by cypresses, acacias and ilex trees, where doves coo to each other all the spring long. As I

passed I heard the loud, ostentatious complaint of a woman sobbing for a recently-lost relative among the asphodels which grow amongst the tombs ; but further on, beneath a fig-tree, was a cheerful group of black-veiled ladies, seated beside a railed-in family tomb, taking the air and exchanging gossip. Prickly pears, tall rushes with feathery plumes, and long trails of wild clematis grew in profusion, and just within the entrance to the mosque a pomegranate suspended its scarlet fruit over the whitewashed wall, near the mosaic fountain.

I was told by the Frenchman who accompanied me that the last time he had visited the place he had been shown round by an aged Christian negress, appointed custodian of the shrine in succession to a dead husband. She professed great scorn of the Moslems and their worship, and when a worshipper withdrew his shoes and prostrated himself in prayer she stationed herself behind him and put her fingers to her nose in derision. It is possible that she paid for some such foolish vagary by losing her position, for the custodian we saw on our visit was a poor and decent Moslem. The mosque was once a Crusaders' church, and for its construction the builders utilised any material to hand, hence the ornate capitals of Corinthian type which adorn the columns.

An Arab archway of stalactite design, built of black and white stone, and bearing a Cufic inscription, leads into a second building, which is the musalla proper, the church being used as outer precincts only. Vandals, alas ! have recently covered over the age-softened tones

of the ancient arch with black and white paint. The mosque within, with its wooden gallery painted in many colours, has also been terribly improved by well-meaning persons. Its mosaic floor is about the only thing left unbedaubed, and it is spotlessly clean. To the north is a chamber containing the tomb of a holy man, where the light is pleasingly tempered by the greenery which has overgrown the window without. The stones which form the arches are cut to a jig-saw pattern, locking one into the other, as in Arab masonry in shrines of the sixth and seventh centuries of the Hegira in Mosul, notably the Panja. In the courtyard there is a well, which may be the most ancient thing in the whole mosque. The minaret has a curious double staircase.

Leaving the cemetery to return to the town, you pass the charming mediæval tomb of Sheikh Tadmor, who, I was vaguely informed, was a *shahid*—a martyr—and several other beautiful thirteenth and fourteenth century shrines: the mosque of Al Ghunseh, the mosque of Khatuniyeh, and the tomb of the Sultan Malik al Dahir. They have the characteristic interlocked masonry above the arches, and are covered with carved inscriptions. In this quarter, the streets, with their tombs and fountains, are continually spanned by arches, and the harem windows of the houses are protected from the curious in a manner new to me—a projecting, semi-circular lattice with a nutmeg-grater effect. The street which turns off at the tomb of Al Dahir leads to the Madrassat al Hosseynieh, with its high arch, its magpie black and white, its inscription and stalactite ornament. The Great Mosque stands

opposite. The inscription above the gateway says that it was built by the Emir Kalawun as Salihy in 693 A.H., which would make it thirteenth century, but within it has been much altered and rebuilt. In the courtyard, old columns, similar to those at Khatuniyeh, have been erected, and from this point one has a glimpse of a lovely thirteenth century minaret. To the right of the entrance to the great Mosque is another delightful Arab building in black and white stone—was it from the Arabs that the Dorias at Genoa took their inspiration?—which harbours a school attached to the mosque.

The Qurtowiya mosque and school is one of the finest buildings in the town, however, and I was grieved not to have been permitted to enter it. This famous mosque was built by the Circassian Mahommed Shems ad Din Qurtai Beg in the 7th century A.H., or the 13th century of the Christian era. In his travels Ibn Batuta mentions this Qurtai Beg as “a man inclined to justice.” It is still one of the most important Moslem schools in the town. I was informed by a local native that he believed that a part of the mosaic over the mihrab was taken to the British Museum.

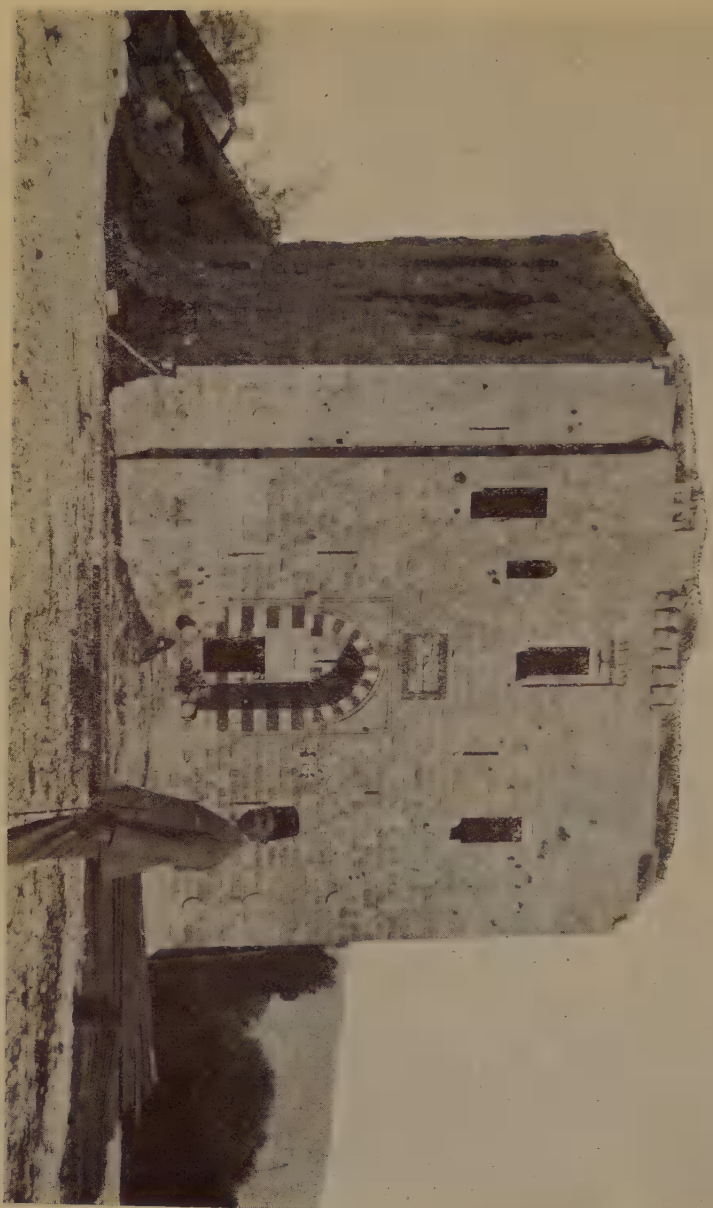
The Sultan Malik ad Dahir, whose tomb I have mentioned, has also a very charming serai named after him in the street going down from the Citadel, that mediæval, climbing road which has been a highway to misery for so many poor souls bound for the durance vile of the fortress. But Tripoli abounds in such buildings and streets. So mediæval is it, that it would give one no shock to see a Knight Hospitaller riding down



Photo by]

Street in Tripoli.

[Serrafian, Eeyrul.



Tripoli : Tower of Lions : South.

one of the narrow over-arched ways or an emir in all the panoply of war. I regret having no photograph of the delightful little mosque of Batasi on the bridge of Suweqa, where the river runs between ancient houses, and looks like a smaller edition of the Arno at Florence. Alas, each of the three times I have passed through Tripoli my stay has been all too short, and I have come away with the tantalising feeling that I have only seen a tithe of what there is to see, and that superficially. As Maundrell says in his preface—"I have this Mitigation to offer, that in a swift and transient View of places (such as mine was), it was hardly possible for me not to be sometimes overseen."

The port of Tripoli—al Mina—is united to the town itself by the mule-tramway. It has recently been improved and rebuilt. Burckhardt says of it:

"The interjacent plain was formerly covered with marshes, which greatly injured the air; but the greater part of them have been drained and converted into gardens. The remains of a wall may still be traced across the triangular plain, from which it appears that the western point was the site of the ancient city, for wherever the ground is dug in that direction the foundations of houses and walls are found: indeed it is with stones thus procured that the houses in the Myna are built."

Northward from the Mina run a line of seven towers constructed by the Arabs during the fourteenth century for purposes of coast defence. The tower near the station at the Mina, close to the railway, is the finest example of these, and is known as Burj as Seba', from

the lions which tradition says originally decorated it. This Tower of Lions is a fine monument of mediæval Arab architecture, showing both the qualities and defects of the period. It stands up imposingly on the sea-shore, and the side of the tower which faces the harbour, with its arch made of black lava and white limestone, is most attractive. But though the walls look so thick and strong, the casing is of a poor quality of sandstone, and the thickness is mostly rubble filling. On the sea side of the tower the stone is fast perishing under the action of spray and wind, and unless the tower receives considerable repairs, it must, before long, fall into decay. Here and there columns of grey granite have been built into the walls to strengthen and ornament them. We were able to ascend by means of a broken staircase to an upper storey, but on account of the dangerous state of the stairway did not venture further. Recently the French authorities ordered the pulling down of a portion of the masonry which could be removed without imperilling the whole building, on account of its dangerous condition, and the work was entrusted to the municipal authorities. The offending wall was duly pulled down, but the workmen warmed to the work of demolishment, and continued it. If it had not been for the intervention of an intelligent railway official, the whole tower would probably have come down : as it was, its safety has been gravely endangered by the zeal of the workmen, who may have been paid by the piece. Within the tower, on the ground level, is a painting on the wall, several times repeated, of two wine-cups, and I know

not what this device, reminiscent of the symbol of Sufi mystics, might portend.

Below the tower is a large cistern for the collection of rain-water, also a well. We were accompanied on our examination of the place by the French railway official whose timely interference had saved the tower, and afterwards he took us in to drink an aperitif in the neat little garden which he had made beside the railway to Homs. It was astonishing in this land of happy-go-lucky to see the ordered flower beds, the meticulously weeded paths, the carefully arranged plants. An Arab garden grows as best it may, without science and without art. To water, prune and plant, the Arab gardener understands, in a rule-of-thumb way, but his knowledge of plants is of the poorest, and such refinements as the rearing of prize carnations or roses far above him. Of arranging a garden in a decorative sense he knows nothing and cares less.

Outside Tripoli, on the coast road, is a shrine which calls for description. It is the pool of the mosque of Ahmed al Bedawi, with its sacred fish. The mosque stands on the site of a Christian church dedicated to St. Anthony of Padua, and in this case it is from Padua, locally called Badova, and not from the nomad Arabs, that the name Badawi has its origin. The history of the pool with its sacred fish is far older than that, however, and may belong to the epoch when some fish-tailed goddess, Derceto or Atargatis, had a shrine here. The pool is enclosed in a semi-circular basin, and the fish, which are very plentiful, are a species of trout. Women

who seek favours of Heaven, whether the birth of a child or the cure of their sick, come here to vow a rotl of bread to the sacred fish ; and they tell me that all through the famine time of the war, the number of fish did not diminish, nor did they ever lack food. The water, which enters the basin from a spring close by, and flows out again into a brook communicating with the sea, is beautifully clear and fresh, and bluish in colour. It is amusing to see the fish trying to pass up the rapids at the point where the water rushes out into the stream, and only the smallest and weakest fail in the attempt, though it needs pertinacious effort to succeed. When a piece of bread is thrown into the water, the spot immediately becomes a seething mass of fish. Within the mosque, before the shrine of the saint, many rags are tied, and there are stones rubbed smooth by being applied to the limbs of the infirm or crippled. There is a local belief that the fish of the pool have cognisance of the affairs of men, and during the Crimean war it was thought that the trout fought for the Turks against the Christian Russians.

Wounds in their sides were said to be wounds received on the battlefield. Whether this belief is a form of the creed of metempsychosis which lingers among the people of North Syria, I cannot say ; still, it is worth recording. The fish are fed daily by the guardians of the tomb and by visitors and pilgrims. A similar pool of sacred fish dating back into times of antiquity is to be seen at Syracuse in Sicily—the papyrus-fringed pool of Arethusa. Thither, too, come

devotees to cast bread to the fat and greedy carp which crowd each other in the water, so tame that I have often put my hand into the water and scratched their backs.

CHAPTER XII

CRUSADERS AND CHRISTIANS

WITH characteristic grim humour Gibbon describes the nature of the lure which drew men to the standards of the Cross when the Church preached Holy War. Of the distant East, pilgrims had brought back tales of wonder "of lands flowing with milk and honey, of mines and treasures, of gold and diamonds, of palaces of marble and jasper, and of odoriferous groves of cinnamon and frankincense. . . ." Mingled with the hopes of securing themselves a heavenly mansion by the holy nature of their enterprise, were the thoughts of earthly spoils and terrestrial delights.

"The spoils of a Turkish emir might enrich the meanest follower of the camp ; and the flavour of the wines, the beauty of the Grecian women, were temptations more adapted to the nature, than to the profession, of the champions of the Cross. The love of freedom was a powerful incitement to the multitudes who were oppressed by feudal or ecclesiastical tyranny. Under this holy sign (the Cross) the peasants and burghers, who were attached to the servitude of the glebe, might escape from a haughty lord, and transplant themselves and their families to a land of liberty.

The monk might release himself from the discipline of his convent ; the debtor might suspend the accumulation of usury, and the pursuit of his creditors ; and outlaws and malefactors of every cast might continue to brave the laws and evade the punishment of their crimes."

Even he admits the worthier motive, which ran like a fire through the veins of the devout and the enthusiastic, inspiring even old men and children, but he enumerates with the religious call the contagion of fashion, the love of adventure and gallant deeds and the encouragement of those who, not wishing to embark themselves on the Crusades, profited by the absence of the Crusader.

The first Crusade, led by the incompetent cowardly fanatic known as Peter the Hermit, after an unedifying pilgrimage through Europe, marked by massacres of the Jews, crime and pillage, and the final flight of the traitorous Peter, ended in a tragic heap of bones. The second Crusade, led by the chivalry of Europe, acclaimed at Rome, greeted with misgiving by the Emperor Alexius at Constantinople, marched through Asia Minor, overran Cilicia, establishing a Frank kingdom in Armenia and Mesopotamia, and arrived in Syria in the autumn of 1098. The armies proceeded to besiege Antioch, and, after gaining a footing in that city through the treachery of a renegade Christian, without capturing the citadel, were themselves besieged by a relieving force from Mosul. The tale of this double siege, sometimes little edifying, has been related by many historians and notably by the imperial

authoress, Anna Comnena. It is a story full of romance. The finding of the Holy Lance, so-called because it was supposed to be that which pierced the side of Christ, the help of celestial knights, the torture of a sceptic who dared doubt the authenticity of the vision which had preceded the finding of the Lance and hinted that the hand which found it had also secreted it ; such episodes are like pages out of " The Talisman," and exceed even Scott's fiction in colour and intrigue.

It was on their forward march, by way of Latakia and Tripoli, the emirs of which gave them free passage, that the Crusaders encountered the Christians of the Lebanon who, coming down from their mountain fastnesses, embraced them with joy and offered to guide them to Jerusalem. Three roads were possible to the invaders—one by Damascus, to which the chief objection was the lack of water ; the second over the mountains, on which the difficulty of transport was serious ; and the third by the sea, though the narrowness of the passage would expose them to attack. Because by adopting the third alternative they could keep in touch with their ships, the Crusaders chose the sea-road, and stayed three days by the Nahr Ibrahim (the Adonis River) at Jubeil, and went on their way by the Dog River, Beyrut, Sidon and Tyre, turning inland at Acre towards Jerusalem.

It was in Syria that many of the dreams of the Crusaders were to be realised. Here were the fair castles, the earthly paradises, the beautiful women. Here, in the soft air of the Mediterranean littoral, by a sea which seemed miraculously blue, where the almond



Qalat al Husn.



Qalat al Husn.

blossom falls like rosy snow at a season when more northern countries are bound by black frosts, they suffered the enchantment which saps the wills of fighting men, and succumbed to the beauty of both climate and women. Tripoli, besieged by Raymond of Toulouse in 1103, fell in 1109, six years later and just after the great Frank Count's death. Baruth, or Beyrut, fell in 1110 to Baldwin. There followed the establishment of the Latin States ; the County of Edessa on the east, the principality of Antioch in the north ; the county of Tripoli, and beyond Jordan, the royal domain with Jerusalem as its centre.

The Latins kept their footing in the Lebanon for some two hundred years, and during these two hundred years, with their variations of fortune, the Crusading fortresses and churches were built. There was the great Castle of Markab between Latakia and Tortosa (Tartus), for the defence of the coast, and inland the Chastel Blanc, the Castle of Arches (Arka) and Qaleiat, the Little Castle. Dominating the valley of the Orontes, and commanding the defiles which led from Homs to Tripoli, was the mighty and famous Krak des Chevaliers or Qal'at al Hosn. At Tripoli was the castle of Mont Pèlerin. Besides these famous strongholds, there were in the Northern Lebanon the Chastel Rouge (Qal'at Yammur) ; the Chastel du Moineestre near Afka, and Cafaraca (Kafar Akka). It was above the village of Beyt Miri that Baldwin built his fortress of Mont Glainen. Besides these, there were fortresses in the coast towns of Tartus, Nefin and Jubeil.

And where the fortress or castle reared its head,

there was found the chapel. Loveliest of those which remain are Our Lady of Tartus and St. John of Jubeil. The church of St. John in Beyrut has long been changed into a mosque. Besides these are many other smaller chapels, such as those of Nefin and of the Qadisha. The Crusader's work was magpie-like, he employed stones which were ready cut if he could, instead of quarrying them from the hillsides. Hence it is that in the Crusading buildings one sees fragments of pagan temples, blocks of Phœnician stone, the Greco-Roman acanthus leaf and the mason-mark of the Moslem Arab. Often he built on the site of an earlier fortress or earlier church.

Of the Northerners' domination over the Syrian races what other traces are there? Feudalism? The feudal system was probably implanted before they came. The Lebanon was feudal in its government right into modern times, and in some parts, particularly where the sheikh of the village is a Druze, it is feudal yet. The lord of a district, with powers of life and death over his people, able to command them to labour or to fight for him by his mere word of mouth, is even to-day to be found in the Lebanon, and in the early nineteenth century, he was to be found everywhere. The annals of the house of Shehab are worth reading, as are those of other great families, such as the Khazen. Such families have now fallen on evil times, the division of property has often resulted in poverty, and though there never were people more learned in genealogies and the ramifications of families than the Syrians, or less forgetful of family ties, one is as likely as not to find

the acknowledged descendant of emirs driving a plough or a taxi.

The Crusader left a tradition, the tradition of the friendship of the Frank for the Oriental Christian. And not only that, but he left his blood. The Crusading knight, in his stronghold on Syrian hills, assumed the seigneurial rights that he exercised at home, and the Syrian maidens, taken by force or of their free will, bore sons to their northern lords. Sometimes, many times in fact, marriages took place between the fair-haired soldiers and the women of the country. To the frequent rapes and casual intercourse which accompanied the first coming of the armies, succeeded legitimate unions and the establishment of families. Children born of such marriages were called "poulains," and there are to this day families which claim descent from the Franks. Lastly, the Crusader is reputed to have definitely established the use of church bells. He liked to hear the bell summon him to mass, as in the land of his birth, instead of the block of wood or metal struck by a mallet which is usual in the East; accordingly, bells were cast to his order and rang out over mountain and valley—and have rung out ever since.*

I should have liked to have visited all these fortresses and shrines, but of those that I did see, the most

* The departure of St. Louis of France marks the decline of the French colonies in Syria, and after 1291, when Akka fell, they gradually became a memory in the land—for the Uniates a memory and a hope.

characteristic and impressive was Krak des Chevaliers, or Qal'at al Hosn—the Castle of a Fortress, as its repetitive name goes. Its position, throned on the summit of a lava mountain above lesser heights, and the green valley of the Orontes beneath, its mighty proportions and its homogeneous design, make it in my memory the worthiest symbol of the power of the North, the most unforgettable monument of their skill and strength. To begin with, it is so obviously foreign and of the North in spite of its Oriental setting. Beneath the ogival vaulting of its halls, one might be in a chapel of Westminster Abbey itself. It is built in the grand manner ; it is easy to imagine companies of knights, barons and princes taking their ease in the vast chambers, or clattering up the stone steps of the covered approach, the vaults echoing to the beat of the horses' hoofs.

To see it I went to Tripoli and spent the night in the hotel there. The road was reputed bad, but eventually the owner of a Ford was discovered who was willing to risk his vehicle. I own that later on, when we were on the road, I marvelled that he did so ; indeed, his own heart failed him half way, and he made as though he would turn off to go to Saffita, and to Tartus, until he was compelled to hold to his original bargain and take us first to Qal'at al Hosn. It was not my first attempt to reach this goal. On a previous occasion some ten miles out of Tripoli the car I was in broke a spring, and we were obliged to crawl back into Tripoli and abandon the projected journey. Therefore, before starting out a second time, I addressed a

fervent prayer to the patron saint of taxis, the great Mar Elias, which prayer was undoubtedly heard, since only one tyre went back on us throughout the long and trying day. In case I may be thought to exaggerate the nature of the road, I may state that I live in Mesopotamia, where the roads are far from first-class and the life of a car is short.

The road at first follows the coast and passes by the sacred pool of Sheikh Ahmed al Bedawi, described elsewhere. It was October when I traversed it, and the road was constantly blocked by caravans of camels, who had to be beaten and exhorted out of the way before the car could pass. October is the month when much grain and other produce is brought from Homs and the interior, and the particular article which most of the slowly-moving, much-bedizened beasts were carrying was onions. Further on, by the seaside, tons of onions had been dumped, prior to packing them in sacks and despatching them by caravan to the cities of the coast, or by the small sailing vessels which crowded in-shore. A temporary Bedouin population had established itself to aid with the transport, and of camels we saw hundreds on hundreds, some very gay with tassels and beads and mirrors. Not for adornment, be it understood, for the red wool, blue beads, and cowrie-shells are of a protective nature, and guard against the evil eye.

A ruined Crusading fortress, the Castle of Qaleiat, stands on the left by the sea-shore after the road has begun to diverge inland over the plain of Aqqar, a low-lying marshy area, rich with cultivation and crops.

Water is nowhere lacking on the stretch of fertile flats which reaches back for some distance towards the hills. Here and there are the reed huts of the fellahin, poor, fever-stricken folk in spite of their outdoor life, for malaria is rife on this lush and treacherous plain. It is slow going over the bad road, and, though we had started at six in the morning, it was well past eight before we reached the wely of Sheikh Ayash, the tomb of a Mahommedan saint which is a land-mark in the featureless district. There is a khan beside it. Burckhardt mentions it as being the third day's station for caravans travelling from Homs to Tripoli. A few miles further on we reached the Khan al Beg, a place of wayside sojourn where there is a fountain, and a water mill turned by a swift stream. Here we stopped to water the Ford, and the sickly and languid inmates of the place stood and gazed at us. Fever had its imprint on their yellow faces and lustreless eyes. The water which brings prosperity to the farmers spells ill-health to the dwellers in these marshy grounds. The maize crops had just been harvested, and flocks of sheep, goats, and cattle herded by peasants browsed amidst the stubble. The folk hereabouts are often of the Nosereiyeh, or Alaouite, religion, but feign, usually, to be Moslems. The strange, secret, half-pagan creed, with its belief in transmigration and its command to kill those who divulge the secrets of the faith, seems suited to the marshy plains and gloomy lava mountains.

Shortly after leaving the khan, we turned off to the right, towards the mountains, and the road, which now began to climb above the flats, grew increasingly vile.

It was a dull, brown, volcanic country through which we were passing, and, as on Etna, spurges grew plentifully. Here and there a little village, built of black lava, squatted meanly on the hillside, but for the most part the hills were bare. Trees there were none and colour there was none. The road to Saffita turns off to the left towards the sea-coast, and we saw the stronghold standing boldly against the skyline. In the sunlight it shone white, and justified its name of the Chastel Blanc. We purposed to visit it on the way back, but were to be later enticed from our intention. It was at this point that our taxi-driver began to get sulky and to do his best to get out of his bargain. His tactics were to assume entire lack of knowledge of the road. To ensure his obedience, we resolved to halt for a moment at Tell Qal'a, a village and railway station on the Homs railway, which here touches the road, and at the serai we collected the local *mustashar*, a young French officer who offered to accompany us on to the Castle.

Our way led down to the green valley of the Buqaya, or little Biq'a, which lies fertile and smiling amidst the frowning hills, and then up the steep lava mountain-side, with here and there a huddling, flat-roofed village, built of lava. It was then that I first noticed the number of people who seemed to be travelling, and in gala clothes. We passed group after group, on foot, on donkeys, on camels, and on horses. The women were in bright colours, with a leaning towards scarlet and yellow, and wore their jewellery. The men were evidently in their best.

"Where are these people going?" we asked, and were told that they were travelling to the fair.

"What fair?"

"There is a great three days' fair at Mar Jirius (St. George), a monastery near Qal'at al Hosn. It is an annual event, and people come to it from all over the country, even from Tripoli and Homs. The monastery is very ancient. Why don't you go to see it? I have to go on there myself afterwards to meet some notables."

We explained that it was our intention to go to Saffita and Tartus, and that time did not allow. But we were severally tempted. There were, it seemed, illuminated manuscripts which would be worth attention, and as for the fair, it was so characteristic of the country that it would be a pity to miss it. Saffita and Tartus could be seen at any time of the year, but an annual event like a fair——

Meantime the road wound upwards, always bad, and very steep. Of the great fortress we had come to see we had caught a glimpse once, in the far distance, a great mass of masonry on the hill-top, but now that we were close to it, we did not see it at all. All at once it burst on us in all its insolent strength, at a turn which brought us below it. Further down the hillside was a village, a mean and insignificant place which had been built near it for protection. The Qal'at is of Titanic proportions. Take the Tower of London and clap it on the summit of a high hill, and even then you would have a less impressive pile. Burckhardt says of it :

“ The castle is one of the finest buildings of the middle age I ever saw. It is evidently of European construction ; the lions, which are carved over the gate were the armorial bearings of the Counts of Thoulouse, whose name is often mentioned in the history of the Crusades. It is surrounded by a deep paved ditch, on the outside of which runs a wall flanked with bastions and towers. The walls of the castle itself are very regularly constructed, and are ornamented in many places by high Gothic arches, projecting several feet from the wall. The inner castle, which is seventy paces in breadth, and one hundred and twenty in length, is defended by bastions. A broad staircase, under a lofty arched passage, leads up from the gate into the castle, and was accessible to horsemen. In the interior we particularly noticed a large saloon, of the best Gothic architecture, with arches intersecting each other on the roof. In the middle of the courtyard we noticed a round pavement of stones elevated about a foot and a half above the ground, and eighteen paces in diameter ; we could not account for its use ; it is now called El Sofra, or the table. There are many smaller apartments in the castle, and several Gothic chambers, most of which are in perfect preservation ; outside the castle an aqueduct is still standing, into which the rain water from the neighbouring hills was conducted by various channels, and conveyed by the aqueduct into the castle ditch, which must have served as a reservoir for the use of the garrison, while it added at the same time to the strength of the fortress. Figures of lions are seen in various places in the outer wall, as

well as Arabic inscriptions, which were too high to be legible from below."

We left the Ford on the steep ascent just below the fortress, and passed under the main gate, above which are Arab inscriptions with a lion inset, and entered the great covered stairway mentioned by Burckhardt. It is wide as a street, and lit by openings from above. Off it, at intervals, open rooms for the guard, now occupied by squalid families, for some two hundred and ten human beings have their habitation in the castle to-day—a colony of maggots in the corpse of a lion. We passed some of them as we went up the semi-gloom of the great stairway, women bearing water-pots on their heads, or ragged men on donkeys. In the courtyard and ramparts are their poor and dirty dwellings, and they occupy the great halls where once knights of noble blood sat at war council.

This castle could harbour two thousand men-at-arms, and some of the rooms were vast, particularly the longest room of all, possibly used as a barracks, and now half choked up with dung and filth of many years' accumulation. The great hall of the knights is ruined, and the windows with their decorative tracery have been filled in with rough stones, to form a wall to some hovel. As I paused on a flight of steps to take a photograph, an aged woman, with distaff and spindle, wearing a costume that has probably undergone little change since the days of the Crusaders, paused smilingly to watch me, and afterwards peeped into the view-finder. We exchanged polite conversational beginnings, and I was subjected to the usual catechism : Was I married ?



Doorway : Qalat al Husn.



The covered stairway : Qalat al Husn.

How many children had I? Where was my husband?

From the central courtyard we went up to an upper chamber from which one could gaze down into the deep fosse, and the buildings beyond the fosse, and could climb up—avoiding a gap in the stairway—to the top of a turret, from which one had a magnificent if dizzy view of the whole. Here and there fig trees sprouted out between the stones of the masonry, threatening the safety of walls; here and there the parasite folk in possession had used the place as a quarry, causing wanton destruction; but on the whole, the edifice was astonishingly solid and well-preserved. The inhabitants were Moslems, but, being a woman, I was allowed to penetrate into one or two places in the possession of families which were closed to my companions as men, and once I stepped over the household fire in order to climb a narrow turret with a winding stairway not far from the chapel.

What the inhabitants call the *kaniseh*, the chapel, may have been used as such during some time of the castle's history, but it certainly was not built for that purpose. It is a very fine building with ogival vaulting. The real chapel, which is properly orientated and has the single nave and apse typical of most Crusading churches in Syria, is now used as a mosque. To the chants of the northern lords and barons with their men-at-arms, their chaplains, and the attendant friars, have succeeded the poor and perfunctory Friday prayers of these degenerate Moslems.

The inner fosse, now dry, runs round under the

turrets of the castle, and in a chamber in the ramparts beyond, supported by columns, is to be found an inscription of the Sultan Beybars, the great Mameluke leader who wrested the fortress from the Hospitallers in 1271. Of Beybars' time, too, is probably a building on the south-east, obviously of different workmanship, which is decorated by two lions. There are Arabic inscriptions on two of the outer towers, but I did not examine them. The headman's womenfolk pressed us to remain and eat ; but to the inducements that he had already brought forward, the French officer who had accompanied us suggested that the best place to eat would be at the Convent of St. George. Thus should we combine a visit to the fair with entertainment, for the monks suffered no pilgrim to go away unfed.

We succumbed, and on leaving the Castle, set off on the road which leads to Mar Jirius, or Mar Djordjos, as Burckhardt prefers to call it. It was really the fitting thing to do, for the convent, close to the protecting strength of its mighty neighbour and built possibly at the same time, was the proper complement to what we had already seen, and was to prove a true relic of the Middle Ages in more than an architectural sense. It is situated below the castle, about half an hour away by car, which follows a lower road from which the castle is finely seen above.

The nearer we approached to the convent, the more numerous became the pilgrims and fair-goers. Ancient dames astride wide mule-saddles, bands of young people gaily attired, dusty groups of travellers from a distance, beguiling the last miles with reed pipes and songs, all

were bound for the same destination as ourselves, for this shrine is famous throughout all Syria. Near the monastery is an intermittent spring—the Dowriya—which is believed to have miraculous healing powers, and is supposedly on the spot where St. George's liver was buried. The usual votive offerings are made there in gratitude for cures. Within the monastery itself, which belongs to the Orthodox Greek community, miracles are also worked, as I shall presently relate. Burckhardt writes of it :

“ It is inhabited by a prior and three monks, who live in a state of affluence ; the incomes of the convent being very considerable, passengers of all descriptions are fed gratis, and as it stands on the great road from Hamah to Tripoli, guests are never wanting. The common entertainment is Bourgal, with bread and olives ; to Christians of respectability wine is added. The convent has large vine and olive plantations in its neighbourhood ; it collects alms all over Syria, Anatolia, and the Greek Islands, and by a firman of the Porte is declared to be free from all duties to the Pasha. Youssef Pasha of Damascus, however, made them pay forty thousand piastres, on the pretence that they had built a Khan for poor passengers without his permission. The prior, who is chosen by the brotherhood of the convent, is elected for life, and is under the immediate direction of the Patriarch of Damascus. Caravans generally stop at the Khan while respectable travellers sleep in the convent itself.”

Our way led south of the Buqaya, keeping Jebel al Habu and the Wadi an Nasara on the right, where, as

may be guessed, there are several Christian villages. At the Ain Ajuz we stopped to fill the water tank, beside other travellers watering their horses and pausing to drink and rest. Then, on again, under the lee of the mountain upon which the castle is built ; until, leaving some orchards to our left, we arrived, while it was yet high noon, at the famous convent. Without the strong walls which surround it the fair was in full swing. Booths had been erected everywhere, and at these sweets, sherbets, cakes, fruit, geegaws, jewellery, toys—all kinds of wares—were being displayed, while cheap-jacks held aloft the articles they were trying to sell with the usual patter.

“ Riha, riha ! ” cried one of them just by the gates as our car drove up, and seeing in us possible purchasers he waved in our direction a bottle of eau de Cologne, extolling its merits glibly. The costumes were wonderful, for the peasants of north Syria are not yet Westernised in dress like the sadly changed villagers of the south. I saw a handsome mountain girl clad in Reckitt's-blue plush, her headdress and throat adorned with gold coins and chains, moving like a queen in her fair-time bravery, and everywhere there were bright colours and gay kerchiefs. The men for the most part wore baggy trousers, wide sashes, and high felt hats, though the French trousers and fez of the town-dweller were present too. Someone told me that never before had so many cars been seen at a Fair of St. George, for at least six Fords, some very battered, stood at rest outside the wall.

Within the courtyard the scene was even more



Qalat al Husn : Hall of the Knights.



Woman of Homs district.

animated. Some twenty or thirty men with linked arms were footing the national dance of the *debka* to the music of a piper, who bent body and arms in violent, encouraging jerks in time to the music ; while the crowds who looked on beat their hands to mark the measure, and applauded the dancers, who were sweating mightily. Above, on the balconies, were other lookers-on. The modern convent and church are built on a higher level than the ancient church, which is down below the surface of the ground, while rooms of the ancient monastery are mostly used for domestic purposes.

We pushed our way through the good-tempered crowd, and made towards the prior's room, around which guests were ranged in chairs against the walls. We were courteously received, invited to sit in the places of honour, and coffee and water were brought. All the world and his wife were here to-day, it seemed. I was introduced to many notables, amongst them the Sheikh of Tel Qal'a (" a most hospitable man," put in the *mustashar*, in an aside. " Why, he stations his sons in the road to intercept travellers and force them into his house ! ") ; the French doctor of the district, and the Cadi. With the latter a bond was immediately established when he heard that I was from Mesopotamia. He had a nephew at Baquba, and before long he was inditing a letter to his nephew which I undertook to have delivered on my return.

The prior was a tall, handsome man, in the usual long, black soutane of the Greek Church, his long hair gathered up beneath his tall black hat. He talked

Greek, Turkish, Armenian, Russian and Arabic, but no French. I was told afterwards that he had hoped for much higher office, but that some internal jealousies in the Church had led to his appointment to this remote spot. He was evidently a cultivated man, far above the intellectual level of the other brothers whom we saw, and was able to give some useful information as to the whereabouts of the illuminated manuscripts which Monsieur Brossé had hoped to find her .

Before long we were bidden to eat, and in a neighbouring refectory was served a plentiful and appetising meal, to which, as we were presumably "respectable Christians" (*vide* Burckhardt), wine was added. We sat down some twenty strong, and the convent fully lived up to its reputation for hospitality. An angular novice, his sandy hair done up in a tight bun behind his head, acted as parlourmaid. The meal was followed by the usual thick, sweet coffee, cigarettes, and nargilehs. I went out into the courtyard to photograph the dancers and some of the costumes, and the doctor went off to visit some patients. Then, at our request, a priest conducted us over the convent.

We went first to the upper church, which has a fine carved eikonostasis, upon which the usual eikons were hung. The work is so mediæval in character that it might well pass for more than its age, but it all dates from about thirty years ago. I asked to see the miraculous picture of St. George, about which I had heard, and was shown a picture of the saint, on the usual gold background, hung close to the entrance of

the church. It appears that a farmer or peasant, anxious to know whether his transactions will be profitable, takes a coin and puts it against the picture. If it adheres he will be successful, and if it falls to the ground he may expect bad luck, unless a second venture with another coin gives him a better augury. The church, of course, keeps the coin. We essayed with a coin, which duly stuck to the picture. The latter, apparently, is covered with a glaze which becomes sticky in the heat of the candles placed beneath it by the faithful.

The lower and more ancient church, together with the lower monastery of the same date, was reached by crossing the upper courtyard and descending some stone steps. From the lower courtyard a few more steps bring one to a small door, not more, and possibly less, than three feet high, which must once have been the only entrance to the monastery. Its original purpose was doubtless to make ingress difficult in troublous times, and it now leads into the courtyard of the khan, the yard of which was full of horses and mules. Its present use is strange. Our guide explained to us that, in return for a favour begged of heaven and St. George, it is customary to vow the value, or part of the value of a mare, which is then forced through this door and up the steps to the church. If the mare refuses, and cannot be made to enter, the vow is regarded as being refused by the saint. "And sometimes, so small it is, a dog will refuse to enter," said our informant complacently. I did not like to think of the floggings which many poor beasts must have undergone at this

tiny portal in an effort to make them cause their owners' vows to be accepted.

The dark little subterranean church which we now entered is more favoured by pilgrims seeking miracles than the newer church above.

Its eikonostasis is also of carved wood, but is of more ancient workmanship, and exceedingly fine. The lower part is of blue Persian tiles. Among the eikons hung on the screen was, of course, one of St. George and the Dragon, and, lying on the ground, just beneath it, was a peasant woman, her face turned to the wall. To my surprise I saw that she was attached to the wall by a chain fastened to an iron collar round her neck. She was groaning and muttering to herself, and at first I thought, knowing of other cases, that she must be a madwoman brought here for a miraculous cure by her relatives. But my guide explained that she was not mad, but childless, and had come here to beg St. George to send her a son. She had been married for ten years and had borne no child, therefore had made the pilgrimage to the monastery. "Many women," he said, "come here to be chained like that because they want children."

"And how long do they stay here?"

"Sometimes a few hours, sometimes days and nights. When the saint has heard the petition, the collar comes undone of itself."

At this point, another woman came in, her face young and comely beneath its picturesque headdress. She, too, was getting anxious because as yet she had borne her husband no child. It occurred to me that

at such a crowded season as fair-time, not a few women must be wishing to take their station beneath the miraculous picture, and that the saint would be inclined to hear quickly. And, as we stood there, a priest came, examined the woman lying on the ground, and declared that the collar had sprung open. While we looked on, the new petitioner smilingly submitted to having the collar placed about her neck—not too securely, I fancied—and took her station beneath the picture.

“ And where do they put madmen ? ” I asked. “ I have heard that they bring mad people here to be cured.”

He took me to the other end of the church, where a portion of the holy edifice was caged off by a grille, in which was a door. Fastened to the wall was a long chain attached to an iron collar. Here the mad are left by night and day in the subterranean church, chained up like dogs and fed on meagre fare, in the hope that St. George will expel the evil spirit possessing them.

“ Have you any mad here now ? ”

“ Yes, we have one madman, but to-day it is the fair, and he is outside in the yard with the horses.”

I saw him later on, sitting amongst the dung of the yard, a quiet figure lost in melancholy thought. During the fair-time, it appeared, he was sleeping in a stable.

We visited the kitchens of the monastery, now so busy with its guests, and the bakery, where several bakers were at work slapping flat Arab loaves into shape with their hands. Smiling, they offered us hot fresh bread, but we told them that we had already eaten

their bread up yonder, and that it was delicious. All these offices were in the rooms of the old monastery. Then we ascended to make our farewells, and to express our gratitude for our entertainment. The *mustashar* asked me what I had seen, and I told him of the chained women. He burst into a shout of laughter and asked the man who had accompanied us if it were really true, and whether such foolishnesses went on. Nettled, the man replied that it was really true. As for the collar, it had come undone miraculously in the very presence of the lady. "Indeed it did!" I corroborated, anxious to soothe his ruffled feelings, and in the undiplomatic behaviour of the young Frenchman, which only sprang from thoughtlessness, I had a glimpse of one cause of Syrian discontent. An officer more experienced in Oriental policy would not have been so outspoken.

The sheikh of Tel Qal'a, hearing that we were about to leave, had left a message that he would expect us to drink coffee at his house, which was right on our homeward road. In answer to objections on the score of time, he assured us that the drinking would not take more than five—nay, *one* minute. Accordingly, on the way back, his sons were out in the road to hail us and show us the house. We went in, and found ourselves in a well-built modern house, which, our host told us, he had helped to build with his own hands. Politeness forbade us to keep strictly to our five minutes. Various members of his family came in as we sat in the reception room, a son studying at Beyrut to be a doctor, and others. It is a pity, as one of my

companions pointed out, that these fine country sheikhs of an older generation should invariably choose the profession of doctor, dentist, or Government clerk for their sons, when such professions are notoriously overcrowded in Syria. It would be far better if the young men were to follow a course of agricultural training, or some technical instruction which would fit them for a country life. Our particular host, whose kindly character was written all over his face, has nineteen children, and will shortly have twenty, it was whispered to me later. Before I went, I was taken into the haremlik and introduced to his wife, a comely and still young woman who alone had produced the nineteen. They showed me with pride their well-furnished bedroom, with a rope in the ceiling to which the hanging cradle of the last arrival was slung. And so, at last, with expressions of goodwill and gratitude, we took our departure, but the sun had already begun to get low. Thus it was that we never visited Saffita after all !

Coming back, amidst the dingy lava hills, I saw a procession of women on their homeward way from the fair. They wore dresses of sulphur yellow and crimson, and as the sun caught them in its dying rays they looked like walking flames. Is it in protest against the general colourlessness that the women of this district love such poppy hues ? I do not know, but it is long since I have seen such bright and vivid garb as I saw in these black lava uplands.

And is it not possible that in the days when the great Castle of al Hosn was newly built, some

Frankish knight, riding back to Tortosa or Tripoli from a visit to the great fortress, may have seen, as I did, groups of women in holiday attire making their way home at sunset after a visit to the Convent of St. George ?

CHAPTER XIII

SYRIAN MEN AND WOMEN IN DAILY LIFE

REVISITING Syria and the Lebanon for the first time after the war, I was struck by the enormous changes that had taken place, not only in the towns but in the general aspect of the people. In 1910, 1911 and 1912, cars were practically non-existent in the country; to-day there are thousands, and taxis are found in every village street. Before the war, the country women wore national dress, with few exceptions; to-day, the picturesque costumes of the mountains are rare, and will soon disappear completely. As regards the women it is a change for the worse. The pretty figured *mendil*, or headkerchief, fringed with silk crochet, and the long, bunchy skirt of the peasant girl, suited to perfection her large-eyed, Oriental beauty, her dark Madonna-like head, and her lovely colouring. Now one sees these mountain beauties in pseudo-Parisian frocks, in garish colours, flesh-coloured stockings, high-heeled shoes and the penultimate word in hats. I know no more lamentable sight than a handsome matron of abundant figure—figures tend to generous outlines in Syria when middle age has been reached—

filling out a dress of severe outlines, her abundant black hair cropped, her face appearing like a full moon beneath a tight cloche hat, and her ankles bulging above French shoes. She must spend prodigious sums on clothes and face-powder, yet the effect is not nearly as becoming as when she wore the silken izar of pre-war days. She was so charming then, so unattractive now. But nothing would induce her to return to the old dress ; she will be European at any cost.

It was always so. The people who live along the Mediterranean, being of mixed race, never cling closely to national dress, national custom, or national speech. Syria is a Mediterranean country, washed by the bluest and laziest of seas, a lotus-land of forgetfulness, where *tout passe, tout lasse*. It has seen race succeed race, domination succeed domination ; Phœnician, Greek, Roman, Saracen, and Ottoman have in turn swayed its destinies. Now it lies, if uneasily, beneath the protection of France. Versatile, imitative, supple, the Syrian is quick to mould himself on the foreigner. He has little national pride. To-day, the average Christian Syrian would rather be taken for a Frenchman than for himself, and deprecates national habits and customs while he uses them. Groups of young Syrians conversing in Arabic until you approach, will change their speech into French or English, and gaze self-consciously over their shoulders at you as they raise their voices.

But in the souls of these dark-haired, opaque-eyed women, these too softly-living, too fleshy men with their perfumes and their French soaps, and their

excellent imitation of European accents and European culture, the East is the East still. They have always imitated the West ; they are never of it. Suave, clever, adaptive, fluent in other tongues, subtle to perceive an advantage, the Syrian is nevertheless an Asiatic, always an Asiatic, for ever an Asiatic. Quick to adopt the superficialities of European custom, he is the more rooted in Oriental methods of thought and habit, and feels himself secretly superior because of them. At heart, he regards certain European ideals of life and conduct as superfluous. A man will go to America and live there for years ; then come back and build himself a house on the same pattern as his neighbours, and tolerate a stench in his courtyard that would give Europeans diphtheria. He does not notice anything amiss or consider the evil negligible. Youths in schools perform prodigies in calculation which few European schoolboys of their age could imitate, yet fail to solve a simple problem which means reflection outside the rules of the arithmetic book. Would-be doctors know medical textbooks and the *Materia Medica* off by heart, yet fail in a simple diagnosis over which a first-year student in European hospitals would not hesitate.

I speak, of course, in the widest generalities, and not from my own superficial observations, but from the experience of Europeans who have lived and are living in Syria : men of business, government officials, schoolmasters, and the like. And there are so many exceptions to prove the rule, so many Syrians of fine character and intelligence, so many men of which any

country would be proud, that it seems hard to write imitation down as the besetting sin of the Syrian, if sin it be. Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, and as long as it takes the form of imitating what is best, it is a quality which commends itself to the intelligent. But imitation of the superficial is a quality condemned by the Arab proverbs, and many Syrians of to-day seem content with just this kind of imitation, and ready to slight their own nationality, language and traditions in so doing.

Physically, what a race it is! In some of the mountain villages I have been amazed at the number of comely faces. At sixteen or seventeen a Syrian girl is at her prime and, hardly noticed where good looks are so general, you will often see at a coffee-house or at a well a young woman of such striking loveliness that it is difficult to remove one's gaze. Good-temper, cheerfulness and health make for a high percentage of beauty, and these are essentially Syrian qualities. Blue and grey eyes are not at all uncommon in the mountains, and as for the children, especially in the villages, I have rarely seen rosier cheeks or rounder limbs. In the towns there is the curse of eye and skin disease to mar the bodies which Nature has so endowed. Trachoma is terribly prevalent, and so are other communicable diseases which prey upon children and grown-ups, carelessly contracted and casually treated. The result of these maladies is often blindness or permanent ill-health, accepted with inertia as coming by the will of God.

In the remoter parts of the Lebanon old customs



Lemonade Vendor : Beirut.



Beduin wedding.

and the old dress still linger. The men wear the baggy trousers, the tall felt hat or *lebadéh*, and the multi-coloured sash that their fathers wore before them ; and the women, the headkerchief (*mendil*), or the twisted turban decorated with coins. Sometimes the women wear a red, round cap, with a black veil fastened about it. The Druze women veil themselves with a long, semi-transparent white wimple placed Madonna-wise over their heads, and pull it before their faces at the approach of a man. The traditional tall horn of silver worn by Druze women only a few years ago, similar to that worn by Jewesses in Tunis, has disappeared, never to return, though it is sometimes preserved in a Druze family by way of curiosity, as we should preserve grand-mamma's poke bonnet. From this *tantur*, or silver horn, the ladies of the Middle Ages are said to have borrowed the tall pointed headdress so common in pictures of the time ; possibly their Crusading husbands brought home the originals from Syria when they returned from the wars. The outdoor uniform of the better class Moslem woman is the black garb and black face-veil which became universal in Turkish times ; while the poorer woman either covers her face with a figured *mendil*, or does not trouble to conceal her face at all. The women of the nomad tribes who wander in Syria of course do not veil, but they can hardly be said to be of Syrian nationality. Women of the richer Moslem class have scarcely without exception adopted European dress beneath their outdoor shroudings and in the house, and a bride's trousseau of lingerie does not differ from the trousseaux of brides in Europe.

But if the women are the first to shed their national dress, they are the last to discard national customs and superstitions. It is the women who climb to remote grottoes to make their vows before deserted altars ; it is the women who tie rags to sacred trees, the women who observe the old customs rooted in dim antiquity. Even then shame has begun to creep in. It is only in the Qadisha and the remoter villages that they still fear the monster which may come up from the sea to devour the children ; that they openly believe that water spirits haunt springs, and pass children through the flames as in the old days of Baal the Lord. The bonfires of the Fifth of November and the bonfires of *Id as Salib*, or Feast of the Cross, are not unrelated, and may have a common origin in Baal-fires. Both take place in the fall of the year. Does not Thomas Hardy say :

“ Indeed, it is pretty well known that such blazes as this . . . are lineal descendants from Druidical rites and Saxon ceremonies rather than the invention of popular feeling about the Gunpowder Plot. Moreover, to light a fire is the instinctive and resistant act of man when, at the winter ingress, the curfew is sounded throughout Nature. It indicates a spontaneous, Promethean rebelliousness against the fiat that this recurrent season shall bring foul times, cold darkness, misery and death. Black chaos comes, and the fettered gods of the earth say, Let there be light.”

Among the Moslem and Druze women, and still more among the Metawileh, the Noseireh and the

Ismailiyeh women, there exists a lively belief in jinns. Christians, or at least such of them as are orthodox, confine their belief in the jinn to possession, and the mad are exorcised before resorting to rougher methods of expelling the evil spirit. The very word for mad, *majnun*, means "possessed by a jinn." However, there are many tales about jinns current even amongst the Christians, some of them bearing a strong resemblance to our fairy and goblin tales. For instance, the following, often told to Lebanese children :

A hunchback once lived in a valley in the Lebanon, and, on account of his deformity, he was known to all as Father-of-a-Hump. The children of the village mocked him and people despised him, and never would maiden look at him. Sad at heart, he made up his mind to wander far away from his fellow-men ; so he packed up his belongings in a bundle, hoisted it on his hump, and set off into the hills, not knowing exactly what he should do or whither he should go. At night-fall, seeing a spring, he made his camp by it, and settled himself down to sleep. But he was awakened by the sound of music and song, and, lifting his head, he saw a number of jinns, male and female, dancing and singing by the spring. "A jinn wedding!" thought the hunchback, and he prepared to steal away before he was noticed. But one of the revellers exclaimed, "I smell a man!" and he was detected and dragged into their midst.

"Do you know how to sing?" they asked him.

He said that he did, and taking the tambourine

they gave him he beat it cheerfully, and joined in their song :

<p>“ Híso, míso Al aris Libbis camíso ! ”</p>	<p>[Híso, míso, The bridegroom is putting on his shirt !]</p>
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“ Bravo ! ” they cried, applauding the musician, and the song was repeated and repeated again whilst they danced.

“ This is a monotonous song ! ” thought the hunchback, and suddenly obeying his inspiration, he added to it :

<p>“ Híso, míso, Al aris Libbis camíso Al arbaa wa'l khamis.”</p>	<p>[Híso, míso, The bridegroom is putting on his shirt Wednesday and Thursday.]</p>
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The jinn people were delighted. “ How you have improved our song ! ” they cried. “ You must come to our king and sing it to him ! ”

The hunchback was taken to the jinn king, who praised his wit, and asked him what he would like best as a reward.

“ I should like best to be as straight as other men,” said the hunchback.

“ Nothing easier,” said the king, and he summoned his court physcian, who with one touch removed the hump from the poor fellow's back, so that he stood up before them a straight and personable young man. Thanking them gratefully, Father-of-a-Hump there and then set off back to his village, with great joy in his heart. There was excitement when his neighbours saw

the change in him, and still more when he told his tale. The village cobbler listened, and thought to himself, "If I had had such an opportunity, I know what I should have asked!"

The next day, Cobble-shoes left the village, went to the spring described by the once-time hunchback, and took up his watch beside it. Sure enough, at moon-rise, out came the jinns, and began to laugh and sing.

"Can you make music?" they asked the cobbler.

"Surely," said he, and struck the tambourine and joined in the song. "If I add to your song, will you reward me as you rewarded the hunchback?" he asked.

"Of course," they answered, and gathered to listen.

"Hiso, míso

Al aris

Labbis camíso

Al arbaa wa'l khamis

Wa'l jumaa wa's sebt!" [And Friday and Saturday.]

At hearing this, all the jinns screamed, "It doesn't rhyme at all!" and set upon him with nails and teeth until he lost consciousness.

Belief in the evil eye is as widespread as elsewhere in the East, and the usual methods are employed to counteract it. Here, as in Mesopotamia, blue beads and blue buttons are sewn on to children's clothes to protect them against its bale, and the harness of horses, mules, donkeys and camels is decorated with long strings of blue beads and cowries, as well as with red woollen tassels, also efficacious against evil.

"Yikhzil al ain!" ("May God defy the eye!") is a favourite protective formula, and here, as in all the Orient, the name of God must be mentioned when praising anything, lest the eye of envy fall on it. I have mentioned elsewhere that blue-eyed people are supposed to have this power of blasting by envy, and so are children born in the dark of the moon, a misfortune dreaded also by the peasants of more northern countries.

The favourite saint of the country is St. George, or Mar Jirius, sometimes spoken of as Al Khidhr (the Ever-Green), a term which in Mesopotamia is only applied to Mar Elias, or the Prophet Elijah. It is Mar Jirius who protects eyes, it is Mar Jirius who blesses the childless if they visit his cave-shrines, it is Mar Jirius who keeps the sea-monster at bay. Perhaps in the fight of the youthful St. George with the dragon there is a remnant of the worship of Adonis, that other youth who engaged in deadly combat with a monster, and of the fight of the Babylonian sun-god with the foul, sea-born beast Tiammat. The English sovereign was none the less precious in Syria before the war because it had on its reverse the image of this national saint and hero, and of his historical fight, the site of which is still shown at Beyrut.

Much that is pagan lingers in the ritual of the Oriental churches, which cast their mantle over ancient customs and ancient beliefs, half Christianising them thereby. The functions of the old gods were many and their offices many, hence the Greek Church has fourteen volumes of prayer for the use of its children, which,

as Dr. Bliss says in his excellent book on the religions of Syria, "cover every occasion." There are, for instance, prayers to be said when a corner stone is laid, a well dug, or polluted, when insects attack the vines, for exorcism of devils, when silkworms are being cultivated, when the sick are unable to sleep, and against the evil eye. As I have mentioned before, some of the Passion Week and Easter ceremonies preserve the Adonis ritual, and the same may be said for the Greek and Jacobite ritual of the Sacrament, with its stabbing of the "jesed" or consecrated bread with the lance of the priest, a symbolism which though professedly commemorative of the stabbing of the body of Christ, may well have its roots in an older tradition. And is not the use of garlands in the Greek wedding service a direct heritage from pagan times, in which crowning by garlands took such a leading part? Sappho is said to have declared that the gods hate all those who come before them with uncrowned heads, but Athenæus, writing on garlands, gives to them a more cynical meaning:

"For the ornament of a crown, as there is nothing lasting in it, is a sort of emblem of a passion which does not endure, but assumes a specious appearance for a while, and such a passion is love!"

Later on, he writes about the same subject:

"Men also crown the doors of the houses of the objects of their love, either with a view to do them honour, as they adorn with crowns the vestibule of some god to do him honour; or perhaps the offering of the crowns is made, not to the beloved objects, but to

the god Love. For thinking the beloved object the statue, as it were, of Love, they under this idea adorn with crowns even the vestibules of those whom they love."

When in Syria, before the war, I went to a Greek Orthodox wedding in a small town. In those days, it was not uncommon that Christian women should be veiled like Moslems, and the bride, who had come from a place some miles away, did not remove her veil all through the ceremony, though once, as she sat in the church, her relatives pulled it up so that I might take a peep at her. She had never met or conversed with her bridegroom, whom she saw for the first time in the church. As for the bridegroom and his friends, they fell to dancing the *debka* in the courtyard in front of the church while waiting for the priest, and to judge by the flushed faces of the men and the strong smell of aniseed, they had all imbibed arak freely before setting out. The ceremony, with its exchange of garlands, once over, merrymaking began in the church itself, and cheap scent and eau-de-Cologne were freely sprinkled among the guests, in fact, some eau-de-Cologne in my eye blinded me for a while to the proceedings. In the subsequent procession of cabs through the town I accompanied the bridegroom's sister, and as we drove along she emitted a series of piercing joy-cries and ululations, echoed and answered by other guests and sympathisers amongst the passers-by. When we reached the house the company assisted at a ceremony which ensured

the fertility of the union ; that is, the bride's hand was taken by a matron and lifted to the lintel of the door, to which a green twig had been nailed. Then the men, who always kept severely apart from the women, departed into one room to feast, while the women sat round the walls of another, and were entertained by the singing of a dancing girl and the beating of a drum. The bride was seated on a higher seat than the rest, and I was placed in the seat of honour by her side, but abandoned an attempt to converse with her when I was told that modesty ordered that she should not speak. As soon as the men had finished their meal the women, including the bride, went in to eat what was left, but as the wedding was to last all day, I took my leave, with the promise to return at nightfall, when the final ceremonies were to take place. In the evening I returned, and found the women motionless as before, and seated round the room, though the bridegroom, a privileged person, came in at intervals to greet us and exchange laughing remarks with the matrons. He was obviously excited with the arak he had drunk, and I felt sincerely sorry for the young bride, whose pretty, composed face was now uncovered. I was told that she was well educated and could speak both French and English, but from that pale and idol-like countenance no inkling could be gathered of joy or disgust. At last she rose to her feet with the help of two married women, and the "dance of the bride" began. Each married woman carried a large lit candle in her right hand, while with the left she grasped the bride, and to the beating of

the drums they began a slow dance, or rather measure, in which two steps forward were followed by a long step backwards, thus expressing the reluctance of the bride to enter the marriage chamber. Finally the door of the room in which stood the great marriage bed was reached, and I took my departure.

The next morning, the woman who had invited me to the wedding came to fetch me, telling me that the bride expected my visit. Accordingly we went to the house where the bride was awaiting us, dressed in her most gorgeous convent-made dress. All my pity for the shy, speechless victim of the day before left me when I saw the absolutely complacent young woman who now greeted me in her best English and best manner. She was evidently well satisfied with her lot, herself and the world in general, and took delight not only in showing me the French dresses which made up her trousseau, but the beauties of the marriage bed, with its silver-embroidered cover and its violent pink draperies. It was obviously better so.

Nowadays Christian weddings throughout Syria tend to become more and more Europeanised. Certain little ceremonies, such as the bride's touching wheat or dough, or some similar emblem of fertility, on her entry into her future home are commonly observed, and a wedding party never uses the same road from the church as that by which it went when going thither, as that would bring misfortune. A lady who lives in Latakia tells me that there a bride's mother very rarely attends the ceremony because, by so

doing, she may prevent the marriage from being fruitful. A common way of securing children to the pair is for a relative or friend to pass a needle threaded with cotton backwards and forwards through the tail of the bridegroom's coat and the skirt of the bride during the service. Rarely now do Christian women don the black concealing veil of the Moslem, and it is usual for the girl to meet the man before the marriage takes place. For the rest, all is done in the European manner, wedding wreath, veil, wedding cake and all.

Similarly, except with Moslems in some parts of Syria, the custom of professional mourners at funerals has gone out of fashion, though loud and public weeping among the women of the deceased's family is considered an exhibition of proper feeling. At a recent funeral in Latakia, an old man of sixty, whose life had somewhat scandalised his neighbours, died in the house of a mistress. However, he was a bachelor, and as such was bewailed by the women of the family. "*Ya shab!* (Oh, youth)," they cried at the funeral, "next spring we would have brought you a bride!" For to die unmarried and without descendants is considered a tragedy in the East.

I have only once been present at a baptism, and that took place in the Greek Orthodox church of Mar Elias, near Shuweir. A Greek baptism begins with the usual exorcisms of the evil spirit, and the god-parents when they have been invited repeatedly to abjure the works of the devil, are asked to spit upon him, which they do. The water is next consecrated,

the manner employed being to drop holy oil on it in the form of a cross, and when this is done, each part of the child's body is anointed in turn—breast, back, ears, feet and hands—so that every sense shall be dedicated to the service of Christ. The child is then plunged three times into the baptismal font, the priest preventing the water from entering its nose and mouth by keeping the nostrils closed with his fingers, and the mouth pressed together. This ends the baptismal part of the service, but the baby has further to enter into full communion, so when it is dressed in its baptismal dress, consisting of white robe, cap and girdle, it is straightway confirmed by being anointed for the second time on the various parts of the body with the *meirun*, or chrism oil. The sacraments are administered directly after confirmation by means of a small sop of bread and wine placed in the child's mouth. There follows a procession round the church with candles, and the child is re-dressed in its ordinary clothes, the ceremony being over. At the christening which I witnessed the baptismal robe was, as is customary, washed in the church, and the soapy water was poured by the stalwart nun who acted as laundress into a hole in the wall, so that none of the water made holy by contact with the sacrosanct *meirun* should fall in an unconsecrated place.

There never were people who enter into merry-making more whole-heartedly than the Syrians. The old-fashioned *debka*, still danced in the mountains,

is being replaced in the towns by the fox-trot and waltz, but it is still the national dance. The gramophone is universal, and mincing misses pick out "Shems Shemouseh" on the piano; but still on the hills sound the ancient reed-pipes, the pan-pipes which have sounded over the Lebanon since the days when Pan himself was worshipped there. Muleteers and caravan leaders love to beguile the march with pipe and song, and impromptu ditties are as much appreciated in the mountains as by the jinns by the spring. There are the long, interminable songs known as *mowwál*, in which the subject is introduced in the traditional way by an apostrophe to the beloved; or the *'ataba*, or "reproaches" dearly loved by the herdsmen who wander their lonely way with their flocks—songs sung by lovers to their cruel ladies. Then there are the *haj*, or camel-songs, the *neshíd*, or war-songs, and the *qarradiya* or satire, often in the form of dialogues. The latter used to be a favourite form of entertainment when professional singers were employed, and extempore wit flowed freely. Lately, in Beyrut, a satire which has become very popular in the coffee-houses was composed on bobbed hair.

This year in the mountains, on one occasion we engaged a muleteer who was particularly good as a musician, and trolled out ditties or played his pipes the whole day from morning to evening. Sometimes it was a "reproach," as, for instance:

"My well-beloved has pierced me with a grain of simsim (sesame)
In twelve years my hurt will not be cured."

or :

Yaqut [Emerald, a girl's name], your cheek glistens like the full moon ! la-la-y !

And your black eyes gleam beneath your veil, la-la-y !

And in your smiling mouth pearls of beauty shine.

For the love of heaven, take pity, I am your slave

And I sink and perish in the sea of love . . . " (etc.)

And at nightfall, when we sighted the lights of our destination and he his native village, Ashqut, he burst into a song originally manufactured in Damascus as a taunt to Beyrut, but easily adaptable to other places :

" Ya Beyrut ! In thee I would not wish to dwell !

Ya Beyrut ! Thou art oppressively hot !

But, Ash'ut, oh, my heart,

The beloved dwells in thee !

" I asked her to give me her love

She replied, ' Go, foolish one !

We are daughters of the Arab,

We walk in freedom . . . " (etc.)

There is not much high poetry about these songs of the people, but at least they are spontaneous.

The life of the peasant is in many ways unchanging and unchangeable. Of what use to the farmer is the motor plough on these steep, rocky hillsides ? The little hand-share, of the same pattern that the Romans found in use when they made Syria a Roman province, is a practical instrument enough for guiding amongst the stones and rocks amid which the scant crop is grown. The herdsman, too, finds little to alter, as

he spends the long days in idle attendance on his flocks of black and brown goats or fat-tailed sheep. Vine culture remains much as it was in the earliest times, and the labour which terraces the hills so industriously must always be peasant labour. In many cases, for *dibis** and wine, the old stone presses, in which the grapes were crushed by stone blocks or the human foot, are still employed, but wooden presses are more usual. The mountain wines are delicious, particularly the wines of Shtora and Raifun, and are very cheap. Few of the Lebanon wines need long maturing : two or three years are long enough to bring them to perfection, and after that they often deteriorate. The olives are excellent, and the cultivation of them might be increased with advantage, for the world's supply is ever lessening, while the demand for the fruit and for the oil grows yearly greater. But olive trees are rarely planted. Why? Because it takes from five to ten years for a tree to mature and bear fruit, and, in poor countries, no man is rich enough to wait as long for a first profit on his outlay. Pure olive oil becomes rarer and rarer, even in olive countries themselves. The oil is diluted with other vegetable and mineral oils even before it leaves the place where it is distilled. The oil bought as olive oil in Europe is so refined and adulterated that it has little resemblance to the pure oil ; in fact, most Europeans have lost the taste for olive oil altogether. I have sometimes been able to procure it from Aleppo, but my family invariably declares that it has too

* A thick treacly syrup made by boiling grape juice.

strong a flavour, and we fall back on the bottles bought in the shops.

Another industry which might well be developed in Syria is apiculture. The natural mountain honey is delicious, and in such a flowery land as the Lebanon the bee-master might produce honey all the year round, simply transporting his hives to the coast for the winter. But few Lebanese keep bees, and if they do, prefer the old method which necessitates killing the bees to get the honey. Efforts to introduce modern hives and modern methods have been met with apathy.

Of sericulture I have written elsewhere. As regards this industry the French Government have been able to effect much good, by supplying silkworm eggs of good quality, and so improving the silk.

The resources of such a country are almost limitless, but the Syrian peasant is his own worst enemy. I have described the manner in which he has destroyed and is still destroying his forests, and his lack of interest in afforestation. Destructive, happy-go-lucky children as they are, they never think of the morrow, or of the possibilities of the present. They value their rich heritage of national monuments so lightly that even now the Government is unable to protect them against the constant vandalisms of the people. An ancient building is to them a labour-saving quarry, and that is all. They never think of improving the quality of their crops or their cattle or their fruit. Their ideal of education, progress and civilisation is to wear a hat and to talk a foreign language. Few Syrians who go abroad and prosper there return with

any conception of civilisation higher than a fine house, expensive clothes and plenty to eat. Spoiled children of nature, they are content with to-day, and let to-morrow slide.

There is one delightful trait about the Syrian, namely, that he is in no way a snob. No nation in all the world has a more intense feeling of family, and the clan loyalty extends to sixth, seventh and eighth cousins. A prosperous member of the family who rolls about in an expensive car recognises without false shame ties of kinship in a cousin who drives a ramshackle *araba* for hire. They are well versed in family trees and family history, and the member of a great family, however humble, is respected for his name. And what an incredible number of children these Syrian papas and mammas produce! Small families are rare, childless couples rarer. Generous, freehanded, exuberant in all things, the idea of birth control is abhorrent to the Syrian nature, even in hard times.

CHAPTER XIV

AMERICA IN SYRIA

IF I were an American and visited Syria, I should come away with a very pleasant feeling of national pride that would fall just short of swelled head. For in Syria the altruism and generosity characteristic of Anglo-Saxon nations at their best have found full expression in the work of America. Not the least of that work has been done since the war, which hurled into the Near East a number of pressing problems which the Near East was too inert, uninterested and incapable to deal with. It is with the history of nations as with the history of individuals: there is usually a strong person to come to the rescue of the feeble. The result of Turkey's action during the war and after it was to burden its immediate neighbours with thousands of helpless starving, destitute people—men, women and children, turned out of their homes to die or to sow disease and misery and crime in the countries in which they were forced to drag out their miserable, exiled existence. Similarly, the aftermath of war and revolution in Russia and the surrounding countries were famine, sickness and degradation. An

organisation, an American organisation, stepped to the rescue.

I remember being seriously annoyed after the war by a series of harrowing pictures showing starved children and dying babies in such papers as *The Times* and the *Daily Telegraph*. We had been fed full of horrors, the war was over, and most of us wanted to forget. Why should other people's troubles be hurled at us when we had enough of our own? That, combined with the number of post-war charities, hardened other people's hearts beside my own. We had enough of sob-stuff. The very names of Armenia and Russia and Greece were enough to freeze the springs of sympathy and pity. It was reprehensible and heartless, but there it was.

Well, visiting Syria this summer it all rose before me once again, and this time the sob-stuff was cut out. It was orderly, practical, common-sense work that I saw; not work to do, but work done and doing. And it was fine work. It was human work. It was work as necessary as the street-sweeper's and sanitary inspector's, and it was done not for any State salary, but from the mere instinct of human service. I mean the work of the Near East Relief, the White Star, which in Syria is concerned mainly with the Armenian refugees.

Along the seashore, and on the outskirts of Beyrut towards the north, a curious new town has sprung up. I called it "Packing-case Town," as so many of the houses were just made of packing-cases nailed together, or any kind of wood to hand. Some of the houses are

three-storied, some are mere huts. Where wood was not available, empty petroleum tins and sacking have been employed as building materials. Huddled close together, these houses form a town of rags and tatters which has activities of its own. Men buy and sell in it, women wash clothes and make lace in it ; there are those who have trades and those who pick up a living God knows where. There are few beggars, for the Armenian is a thrifty, industrious soul, and where there is work to get he will get it if he can. But work is not easy to get, and the general impression is of a people existing on the narrowest margin possible to the economics of daily life. It is not very clean, and the stench in some parts of it is almost unendurable. It is also incredibly overcrowded ; I went into one tenement, or small hut, where twelve families lived together in a single room, each allotted a small portion of floor space. Here the great events of birth and death were familiar even to the youngest, for there could be no secrecy or privacy in such a place. On the shore itself, in the arches of the bridge and wall, are more poor shelters, sodden in winter by sea-spray, and inhabited like the hovels of Packing-case Town by numerous families.

These refugee camps and suburbs are a constant danger to the towns which harbour them, and yet, where are they to go, these unfortunates turned out of house and home, and brought to beggary through no fault of their own ? Many of them have been well-to-do folk in their own villages—now theirs no longer—many have been land owners, or successful

merchants. Some have been peasants or farmers, but are now without land to till. The sense of nationality, clan and family is strong in them ; village clings to village and town to town, so that the people who lived in Marash are all in one quarter, the people who lived in Aintab in another, and so on, nor can they be persuaded to leave what is all that remains to them of home. Many a time work has been found in the mountains for a mountain-born Armenian, who is found a short time afterwards in the slums of Packing-case Town again, because he felt so lonely away from his own people.

For these poor people not much can be done, even with the best will, but the future of every nation is its children, and it is with the children that the Near East has particularly busied itself. It has gathered up human flotsam and jetsam as the tide of war receded ; it has followed in the wake of the famine spectre, it has snatched thousands from the jaws of pestilence and disease. And it has thus formed the nucleus of a new Armenia, an Armenia which has had opportunities denied to the old Armenia, though it has eaten the bread of affliction and drunk the waters of adversity. The Americans and those who have helped them took raw material and wove it into an orderly pattern, which would otherwise have become the stuff that rogues and criminals are made of. The sharp, hunger-cunning look once out of a child's eye, he is a human creature again. Before, he was only a small, half-starved, verminous brute, more than a little like a pariah puppy, his embryo soul so

concentrated on the business of food that it had become the soul of an animal.

I am not concerned here with the work that the Americans have done in Caucasia or Greece ; just with the work in Syria which I actually saw. There are eighty thousand Armenian refugees at present in Syria. What a problem for a country, and not a rich country, to deal with ! Eighty thousand starving destitute aliens, most of them knowing no language but their own, are welcome nowhere. At first the Near East Relief gave help to all that needed it, generously but discriminatingly ; now its activities are chiefly confined to the children, the orphans and half-orphans, a family at present numbering about eight thousand. The object is not only to feed and clothe these young derelicts : it is to educate them and fit them to earn their own living as soon as they are old enough ; to teach them such languages as will be necessary to them in their new country, and to give them such standards of life and conduct that they will become useful citizens. It does this, not under the flag of any particular faith or sect, but in the brotherly name of humanity.

It is not an easy task. Orphanages are apt to become terribly "institutional," a disease which is insidious and deadly. Rules, regulations, discipline, must be managed very humanely if this disease is to be kept at bay, a disease which eventually produces human machines instead of human beings—creatures who are lost without the rule and the word of command. The Americans have most happily avoided

that, chiefly by employing as helpers young and enthusiastic people with ideas of their own ; people who value the individual more than the institution—people who do not look upon the naughty boy or girl as a monster, but as a small problem to be successfully solved. I visited three out of the five orphanages that are now left in Syria—for many of the nestlings have become birds by now and flown out of the nest—and everywhere I saw the result of this attitude—smiling faces and free gestures ; “ miles and miles of smiles ” ; children who, when spoken to, answered as individuals, rather than in the repressed manner of “ orphanage orphans.” At Antilyas there is an orphanage for boys to which Australia has given liberal support. It is managed by a young man with a sense of humour and a love of the healthy human boy. “ They’re topping kids,” he said to me casually, as he watched with a big-brotherly smile some hundreds of tearing, ramping youngsters scrambling with a football—made from a pig’s bladder and covered with the seat of some boy’s pants—round and round the big playground. Every morning the seven hundred and fifty boys at Antilyas run down into the sea for a bathe, and a life-saving crew of the Antilyas boy scouts stands by in case some youngster gets into trouble by swimming too far.

There are enthusiastic boy scouts at Antilyas, and boy scouts stand on guard day and night by the entrance, relieving each other in regular shifts. There are twenty-two masters for these Antilyas lads, and eight technical instructors, the latter being engaged

to teach the children trades—building, carpentry, boot-making, tailoring, tin-smithing, and blacksmith's work. One large dormitory was built by the boys themselves, another partially built by them. There is a hospital for the sick (when I visited it it was all but empty except for a few boys with cuts or whitlows), and there is a dispensary and a nurse. Favus is all but stamped out, and trachoma too. Cases of favus and trachoma are not isolated, but the children are made to realise how to avoid being affected—a far more useful method when one considers that when they leave the orphanage they will come into contact with these diseases everywhere in the East. I was shown the clever handiwork of one boy-artist, whose sight is almost gone because of trachoma. It is hoped, however, that his sight may yet be saved, and if this is so, he will be trained by someone interested in him, at one of the big studios in Paris. It was getting near bedtime when I visited the orphanage, and some of the boys had already tumbled into their beds—mattresses spread on the floor in a long airy dormitory—and were fast asleep, although other boys were shouting and playing near them. Some sat in groups, talking—"Probably politics," said Mr. Brown; "you'd be surprised to know at what age these kids get talking politics!" Others sat with their heads close together listening to a fairy-story of old Armenia—a big boy was the narrator; yet others had books propped up before them as they coned some lesson for the morrow. Some of the boys have gained scholarships into the American College. In the carpentry shops some boys



Suppertime at Birds' Nest : Sidon.



Armenian orphan girl weaving carpet at Ghazir.

were working overtime, anxious to finish an order that had come in for some furniture ; others were flying helter-skelter about the big yard in the manner of boys, skylarking, ragging and jumping. In no case were these activities interrupted by our intrusion. Boys spoken to answered frankly and smilingly. Each boy has his treasure box, in which he keeps the things he considers precious, some photographs, his knife, odds and ends of string, stamps or eggs or other valued nothings. One boy—a youthful Rockefeller—has made a corner in marbles by a series of transactions which have the flavour of high finance. An hour later, long after the bell had sounded for bed, I saw a sight which impressed me more than all. By then every boy was in bed and asleep. I looked into the darkened dormitories, illuminated by a big lamp outside. The boys looked like so many dead creatures, so profound and motionless was their sleep. Not a movement, not a twitch, not a snore, not a restless limb. It was the sleep of healthy and happy youth.

Up at Ghazir—for ever associated with Renan, since it was here that he wrote his “ Life of Jesus ”—there is a girls’ orphanage. Here, in addition to their schooling, the girls learn rug- and carpet-weaving. There are about a hundred and ten looms here, and at these sat girls of about twelve, thirteen and fourteen, busily engaged in slipping the coloured threads into their places, while they sang like larks. I heard the sound of their singing before I got to the house. The younger girls are learning, the older girls are practised hands, and I saw on the looms a fine big

carpet which had been ordered by the President for White House. To it some careful little fingers had attached some blue beads, lest the evil eye of envy should fall on the beautiful fabric. Old patterns and old methods are followed ; and where possible vegetable dyes are employed in preference to the aniline. The prices asked for the finished rugs are not high—a small Shirwan rug was priced at three pounds ten shillings. The experienced carpet-weavers work for eight hours a day. This trade, which is a means of livelihood and can be followed even in the home if the girls marry—and many of them do—is a trade which many of them would have carried on in Armenia or Turkey, and a trade which means certain employment at any time. That the work is not unpleasant the rows of smiles and pigtails testified. Ghazir also has some eighty-six blind, some of whom are employed in winding wool, others in making mats. The workshops are at a little distance from the orphanage itself, which occupies a one-time convent and church, the latter being used as a dormitory. Here I saw girls mending, washing and dressmaking, useful domestic arts which will fit them for later life. Ghazir has a large list every year of girls who marry. The suitor often comes simply asking for “a wife.” He selects the girl who tickles his fancy, and if she is willing the marriage is there and then celebrated, with the merry-makings and good wishes which accompany such events in Armenia.

The third orphanage I saw was the babies' home on the hillside at Sidon, known as “Birds' Nest.”

Some think it is so named because of the countless birds which build their nests in the eaves of the Druze palace which has been converted into a big nursery ; but its name was originally given on account of its human nestlings. I have sworn to avoid the dreadful, but the contrast between the smiling, plump, delicious babies that I saw here, and the naked, rat-like, verminous and diseased little atoms that were originally picked up all over Asia and brought here, is dramatically sharp. Children were brought here, tiny things covered with sores and filth, that shrank from the human touch like frightened animals, and spat and bit like tiger cubs. One small boy, acquainted with horrors too terrible to be described, could not smile, and for months was never heard to laugh. The Danish lady who showed him to us—a chubby, happy youngster now—said she never heard anything so startlingly tragic as that child's first hoarse laugh.

“ Birds' Nest ” is one big, sunny, happy nursery, and the children, numbering now 365—one for every day in the year—are darlings. I saw them playing their kindergarten games in the big schoolroom, and when they had done their little songs and dances—how they chuckled and jumped !—they came crowding about us offering small fat hands and kissable cheeks, as if every one of them was the spoiled darling of some mother's heart. The age of most of them was between three and four, and the open air and sunlight had turned them into sun-babies with brown arms and legs, and sun-bleached curly heads. Some were fair, others dark, and it seemed to me that

every one of them was good to look at. Often these adorable babies find a mother to adopt them, and I do not wonder, for to look at them is to wish to possess them. Denmark is largely responsible for Birds' Nest, and in some cases will provide for the children after they have passed the nursery and school age, taking care that they are suitably fitted for life's work and play. Some of the older children have more serious schooling, and the little girls are being taught to do embroidery. I saw the little mud dolls' houses that they had built for themselves in the garden, where many happy hours of play are spent. The last thing I saw at Birds' Nest was a group of small four-year-olds, who ran laughing up to the car as it started, to wave their sunburnt little paws at us as we went away.

The greatest difficulty of all is the placing of these children when they are ready to leave. Some are claimed by their families or relatives, and in such case the N.E.R. cannot stand between such reunions, though often the child would be better off in their care. They do not lose sight of such children, however, and I went with one Near East worker into a filthy slum in Packing-case Town to see how a little girl now living with her father was getting on. Some help was being given to the father for the child's sake, as work was scarce and the child had grown thin and peaked for want of food. Another blind boy that I saw ran away from relatives who had claimed him, and was allowed to remain. His father and brothers at Homs were diseased, blinded creatures who got

their living by mendicancy, and the boy was turned out to beg for the family when he arrived. He has now learnt braille, plays the violin, and works at a trade.

Applications are often made by Syrians to adopt a child. Sometimes the offer is genuine, and made by people who mean to treat the child as one of their own ; often it is made by people who want unpaid labour in the house, in which case it is rigorously turned down, for no child is placed without the strictest enquiry. Boys grown up and qualified for some trade are placed as best they may be with houses of business and often establish shops of their own. But it is a difficult business to find employment for all, and needs tact, vigilance and discrimination.

The other great American institution in Syria is, of course, the famous American University of Beyrut, an institution to which, not only Syria, but all the Near East is indebted, for the men who have been trained there are in request everywhere, as Government employees, men of business, doctors, school-masters, dentists, and men of affairs ; the fact that they have graduated at the American University being a guarantee that they are not only well trained, but trustworthy. Parents all over the Near and Middle East send their sons to Beyrut for the American college training, in the sure and confident belief that they are doing the best thing for their minds and characters alike. I shall trace the history of the beginnings of the University in the next chapter, so that here I will

confine myself to describing something of the record of the college during the war and its work to-day.

The University strikes the eye as soon as one approaches the coast in the steamer, with its campus half a mile long, green with trees, its thirty-two buildings, and its tower over the arts and science building. The students are proud of their campus, which is one of the pleasantest spots in Beirut, and the founders of the college chose the site well on the rising ground to the south of the city, which gets all the sea breeze and escapes the close, damp heat of the lower town. Here grow tall cypresses and palms, the cactus and the yew, and quantities of shrubs and flowers of tropical and native origin. In addition to the gardens are the playing fields—grassless, of course—in term-time scenes of activity and energy where students of every race mingle in their various games, football, basket-ball, hockey, tennis, and occasional baseball.

Through the war the record of the University was an honourable one. The problems before those who guided its policies were many and delicate. When America finally emerged from her neutrality, the tension for a time became acute. But the University only closed for one fortnight. The friendliness of Djemal Pasha, War Dictator of Syria, and his personal esteem and friendship for the then President, Dr. Howard Bliss, was such that at the end of that period it was re-opened and never closed again, though the path of its staff was often a prickly and difficult one. With the occupation by the Allies in 1918 came relief,

but fresh problems succeeded the more pressing difficulties of the war, and the President was required to give advice at the Peace Conference in Paris, working hard for the interests of his beloved University and for the good of the country in which he was born—for he first saw the light in the Lebanon. The strain of war and peace proved too much for him, and he died in 1920, having brought to his life's work high ideals, a fine character, and an unfailing tact which did more than centuries of history to bring the East into touch with the finer ideals of the West.

The Reverend Bayard Dodge—who married Dr. Daniel Bliss's granddaughter, thus bringing into close alliance the two names bound up most intimately with the prosperity and fame of the University, for the Dodges have been from the first generous supporters of the institution, and to Dr. D. Bliss it chiefly owes its existence and its reputation—is its President now, and it was he who most kindly showed me over the buildings and campus of the University. It was so vast that I am afraid of all the many houses, classrooms, laboratories, lecture-theatres, clinics, recreation rooms, students' quarters and other parts of the University that I visited, only a confused memory remains. I remember particularly the chapel, in which a non-sectarian religious service is held five days in the week, which every student must attend; an alternative of attendance at a series of exercises which present the moral and spiritual aims of the University is arranged for those who object. On Sundays services are held in the chapel, which students

may attend or not, as they please. I remember the big library, with books of every language ; the Museum recently arranged by Mr. Leonard Woolley ; the hospital ; the excellent Mary Bliss Dale home for nurses ; and the fine X-ray plant. I remember, too, the big hall used for concerts and assemblies, with its wide, open windows giving a wonderful view of the sea, where students practise roller-skating on winter evenings. In general I got the impression that nothing which might improve body or mind of the student was left unprovided—provided amply and with every advantage and refinement that modern methods suggest.

The medical side of the University is particularly fine. Students can take a five-year course at the school of medicine, which qualifies them for medical practice in any country in the world. The school of pharmacy has a three-year course, the school of dentistry a four-year course, with two years of scientific collegiate work as entrance. In the school of nursing for women a three-year course qualifies students as skilled nurses. Most of the students are Armenian and Christian, but there are one or two Moslem girls already who are taking up a career which means so much in the East. The Mary Bliss Dale Home is for pupil nurses, and has a charmingly arranged reception room, a dining hall and private rooms in which each student is allowed to express her personality. The University hospital has nearly two hundred beds.

Where do all the youngsters that the University

is shaping into men and women come from? Only forty-four per cent. are from Syria. The rest come from Palestine, Egypt, Iraq, Persia, Greece, and Armenia, an army which returns to the countries which sent them bringing with them the civilising, humanising influences of their Alma Mater. The new automobile routes across the desert have meant greatly increased facilities for would-be students. The big desert cars are laden at the beginning of term with returning freshmen and students, who undertake the long journey across the waterless wastes with as little concern as an undergraduate in England returning to Oxford or Cambridge. Forty-seven per cent. of the students are non-Christian; happy result of the wise non-proselytising methods practised from the beginning by the founders. Old students keep up an enthusiastic connection with the University which has done so much for them, and a recent development is the Alumni Fund, which goes to endow scholarships for poor pupils, contributed to by ex-students all over the world.

As I have said, the debt to America and American men and women is not only Syria's, but that of all countries in the Near and Middle East, and indeed, of all the world, since their peace and enlightenment is the good of not only themselves, but of the world. Progress in Central Asia spells progress in the West, since the fortunes of the one are so inevitably bound up with the fortunes of the other in war and peace, health and sickness, bad times and prosperity. The

politics of Central Asia react on the politics of the Western world ; nothing can be achieved in Central Asia without the goodwill and co-operation of Europe, no event can take place in Syria, Iraq or Iran without an echo in London and Paris. And amongst the best of influences bringing goodwill and gratitude, the West must count America in Syria.

CHAPTER XV

FRANCE AND SYRIA

"WE are persuaded," said Saint Louis IX, King of France, in 1250 A.D., speaking of the Maronites of the Lebanon, "that this nation, which we find established here under the name of St. Marun, is a part of the French nation, for its love for France resembles the love which Frenchmen bear one another." The persuasion lasted, and in France Syria itself has been regarded as the Lebanon plus certain embarrassing districts and communities which are neither Maronite nor Christian. It is a persuasion which has largely been the cause of the trouble which at present torments the country and has brought a large portion of it into revolt. France had, since earliest times, indissolubly associated herself with the Christians and their interests in Syria, and when she donned the mantle of a mandate it was difficult for the Moslems and non-Christians to realise that she would faithfully carry out her promises of fair dealing and no favour. That France has honourably striven to do so there is no question, but she has been hampered, not only by her past policy, but by an atmosphere of mutual suspicion,

by various inabilities resulting from her lack of suitable advisers, and by regrettable misunderstandings on both sides. The Maronites of the Lebanon have been Francophil since the time of the Crusades because they looked upon France as the champion of the Uniat faiths in the Near East and their natural defender against the Moslems. They saw in the French mandate a fulfilment of their hopes and the certain prospect of getting the upper hand over their Moslem and Druze neighbours. And if the French were not to be pushed into any gross favouritism at the cost of the non-Christian element, they were thus far influenced by their old professions that when for administrative purposes they broke up Syria into separate States each with a governor responsible to the High Commissioner, they made the State called the Greater Lebanon extend over tracts of country and towns (among them Beyrut) which had never been included before in the autonomous district of the Lebanon, thus embracing areas where the majority were not of the Christian faith. And so the breach widened until trouble was inevitable. It is worth while examining the relations of the two countries from the beginning.

When the armies of the second Crusade arrived on the Syrian coast, chroniclers describe the glad descent from the heights of the Lebanon of sturdy mountaineers, well armed and bringing gifts of food, who welcomed the invaders as brothers in faith. These people, who furnished the Crusaders with guides and information

on their march to Jerusalem, were the Maronites, deriving their name from their alleged founder, a Saint Marun, who died at the beginning of the fifth century. There was a later Marun too, Mar Yuhanna Marun, first patriarch of the Maronites, a stout champion of the Church who lived from 685-707 and with his monks repelled attacks against the faith in the rocky gorges near the source of the Orontes, about whom legends are many though history is vague. In spite of the denial of later apologists in the Maronite church, it seems clear that the Maronites were originally adherents of the Monothelite heresy. Among the many and hair-splitting divisions of doctrine so bitterly fought over in the early days of the Christian Church, which was this? It was a theory as to the nature of Christ, "that in our Lord Jesus Christ there is and has been from the beginning but one will and operation." None but a theologian can be much enlightened by such a definition! But, as Dr. F. J. Bliss says, in his excellent "The Religions of Modern Syria and Palestine," "the Maronites, whatever they may once have believed, have been loyal to Catholic doctrine for over seven hundred years."

Though they own allegiance to Rome, the Maronite Church does not follow the ritual and practices of Rome in all things. Strongly national, it clings to much of its own national ritual and customs, which include the employment of the Syriac and Arabic languages in their church services, and the retaining of the Eastern use for baptisms, marriages, burials

and feast-days. Still more surprising, married priests are allowed in the Maronite church, as in the Greek Church, although marriages must be contracted before ordination, and no second marriage of a priest is allowed.

When the Crusaders came to the Holy Land, therefore, they found Christianity established since the earliest days in the mountain fastnesses of the Lebanon ; and, besides, allies who knew the language of the country and were able to serve the armies of the faith as soldiers, guides and spies. Twice Louis IX drew Syrian contingents from the Lebanon and from Syrian colonies in Cyprus, and in the letter from which I quoted at the beginning of the chapter he added the undertaking, " We promise to give you and your people protection as to the French themselves and to do at all times what becomes necessary for your happiness." Whether this letter is apocryphal or not, for its authenticity has been doubted and the original is not in existence, it was seized upon by the Maronites as a charter. In the course of the two hundred years during which the Franks maintained themselves in Syria, the period during which their fortresses, chapels and convents were built, the friendship between the two peoples became sealed by community of interests, by intermarriages, by the fact that the going of the Franks meant the loss of protection for the Christian faith. Many of the Crusaders became colonists. Many a Northerner, forgetting his native land, lived and died in the East, taking to himself a Syrian bride and adopting Syrian

ways of life, Syrian manners and Syrian dress, leaving a heritage of Northern blood which still has its traces in the fair hair and blue eyes to be found in many villages of the Lebanon. Many a fair chatelaine in distant France and Flanders watched in vain for the return of her Crusading hero. He had succumbed, not to the lance of the paynim but to the soft charm of Syria and her black-eyed maidens, to the balmy air of the Mediterranean coasts and the fertility which makes of life an easy thing.

With the disintegration of the Latin States and the departure of the Crusaders, the relations thus intimately established between France and the Christians of the Lebanon were not entirely broken. Already trade had begun to unite Marseilles to the Syrian coasts, and merchants exploiting the culture of the silkworm, of flax and of other commodities, used French as the language of commerce. The French influence, used to protect Roman Catholics in the Levant, was invoked by the various Franciscan, Carmelite, and Dominican orders which had established themselves in Palestine and Syria in times of stress and trouble all through the Middle Ages. The Carmelites, indeed, were of purely Syrian origin, since they were founded about the middle of the twelfth century on Mount Carmel, above Haifa, by Berthold, who had been a Crusader. St. Francis of Assisi came himself to Akka to found the first Syrian establishments of Franciscan friars, and Akka became in 1220 the official residence of the Provincial. The Dominicans established themselves in Damascus in 1230. The

Franciscans became the guardians of all places of pilgrimage in Jerusalem, and were for a long time the preponderating influence in the Levant. The Jesuits followed much later, but proved to be a more energetic influence from proselytising, educative, and political standpoints.

Francis I was the sovereign who, by obtaining the Sultan's signature to the first Capitulations of 1535, established regular and diplomatic relations with the Ottoman Empire in Syria. He obtained by these capitulations certain rights of commerce and protection for his subjects in the free exercise of their religion. Henry IV, when these Capitulations were renewed, extended these rights and made them more precise. Louis XIII in the seventeenth century began to establish more intimate relations with the Lebanon, and in the time of Louis XIV, le Roi Soleil, these were notably increased. The latter was the first to assume the official title of "Protector of the Christians in the Levant." From this time France made continuous efforts to interfere in the internal politics of the Lebanon. "*La Syrie, la belle et douce campagne,*" evoking sentimental memories of the time when the chivalry of France held Islam at bay on its shores, appealed to the imagination of France as well as the cupidity of its rulers. Napoleon Buonaparte dreamed of it as the basis of a French Empire in the East, and was only defeated by the astute bargaining of the pseudo-Christian Emir of the Lebanon, Beshir Shehabi II who, by temporising, evaded espousing the cause of the ambitious young general. The conquest of

Egypt had been accomplished, and the new Alexander still turned his face to the East. The key to the situation was the fortified town of Akka. Beshir, appealed to by Napoleon, held his hand. Napoleon made reference to all the old ties which linked the French to the people of the Lebanon. According to tradition, he is said to have received the deputation sent by the Maronite Patriarch with the words, "Je reconnais que vous êtes français de temps immémorial." But such blandishments availed nothing. The Emir of the Mountain, though supposedly Christian, sat on the fence, and was justified of his caution when the French had to abandon the siege of the town. Those who had too incautiously displayed their sympathies then paid for it in blood.

"Les longues fiançailles de la Syrie et de la France," writes Paul Roederer in 1917, in the course of a work in which he rhapsodically discourses of France's claims to Syria—a Syria which in his opinion should embrace Palestine, Armenia, and the Mosul Vilayet—"ont été troublées par plus d'un jaloux." He wrote during the war, and was careful not to name an ally among the "jaloux." But the other powers of Europe early cast a nervous glance at France's too-active entry into Near Eastern politics. France, with an almost theatrical gesture, had appointed herself champion of the Catholic Christian in the Levant: her missionaries and merchants were at the same time political agents, ready to stir up trouble if the interests of France and Catholicism were to be served thereby.

As a matter of fact, the Lebanese were never so well off as in the times of the great Emirs, especially when such men as the great Fakreddin or Beshir II held the reins of government with a firm hand. The Christians claim that both these emirs were Christian. They were both great diplomatists, and if their Christianity went no further than a reputed baptism, they held the balance impartially between Druze and Christian, between sect and sect, and between fanatic and fanatic. Under their iron rule justice and peace obtained. But European intrigues gained the day, and the five great Powers who met at Constantinople in 1842 decided on a divided form of government in the Lebanon, by which Christian and Druze kaimakams were to wield joint authority in the Lebanon. In spite of generous support on the part of the signatories to ensure impartiality and just representation of different interests, this was a disastrous form of government and produced nothing but inflamed hostilities between the religious sects of the mountains. The Maronites were drunk with hopes founded on the loud and persistent backing of France, and undoubtedly, and by their own account, they were the aggressors in the trouble which followed. They dreamt of sweeping the warlike Druze clans from the mountains and making the Lebanon a fastness of Christianity and Catholicism. They looked forward to a triumph over their brethren of the Greek Orthodox and Jacobite churches. They dreamt of a time when the so far doubtful benefit of nominal French protection would be exchanged for hegemony and independence of the

Lebanon under the French flag and supported by French troops. And in those dreams they were undoubtedly encouraged by French political agents. Acts of aggression were multiplied and the patience of the Druzes wore thin. The Druzes were numerically inferior, but they were fresh from the campaign against Ibrahim Pasha in which they had taken part against the Egyptian troops, and they were fierce fighters.

The first blood was shed by a Christian band, but the fight soon became a one-sided affair and ended with a massacre of the Christians. The great massacre of 1860 is still spoken of as a landmark in the history of the Lebanon. It was not a religious quarrel. Druzes and Mohammedans alike were alarmed at the Maronite pretensions, and were encouraged in those alarms by foreign and Turkish agents.

The massacres were terrible, but not quite so terrible as they have been made out to be since. On the whole, except in a few instances, the Druzes respected women and children. So far was this the case that Dr. Bliss, the first President of the Syrian Protestant College, actually counselled the men of one village to flee, leaving their women and children behind, since the Druzes did not attack women. His advice was disregarded, and when the Druzes advanced on the village the men were massacred.

There was a general outcry in Europe, especially when the massacre in Damascus followed. Napoleon III was ready and anxious to become the champion of Christendom in the Lebanon, but the other Powers,

the "jaloux," as Monsieur Roederer naïvely says, were viewing with increasing suspicion France's attitude towards Syria. Each nation had its own particular sphere of influence: the Russians protected the Orthodox Greeks; the Italians, free from and antagonistic to the Papal temporal power, clung nevertheless to the temporal interests which the Church had acquired in the Levant; lastly and chiefly, Great Britain, above all others the "grand jaloux," had friendly relations with the Druzes and was suspected of extending her influence through Protestant missionaries. Then Turkey proved herself capable of setting her own house in order by sending to Damascus a strong avenger in the person of Fu'ad Pasha, who in reducing that city to order, showed himself to have the situation well in hand.

French troops were duly sent, but were hedged about by precautions on the part of the Powers. They wished to be very sure that the expeditionary force would return. And return it did, though unwillingly, accompanied by sighs of relief from the other Powers of Europe. It was then agreed between the Powers and Turkey that the Lebanon, which was understood as including the eastern slopes of the Lebanon range, bounded on the north by the Tripoli sanjak, on the south by the Litani river, thus excluding Beyrut, was to become autonomous under a Christian governor, not belonging to any Lebanese race, to be nominated by the Porte and approved of by the Powers. The term of office was to be for five years. He was to be responsible to the Porte and to be the

ultimate authority in all matters of internal administration. Maintenance of order was to be by a police force recruited in the Lebanon and organised by the French. Nominally this form of government existed until the Great War, when at Turkey's entry into the ranks of combatants it was abolished. The autonomy, under the despotisms of Abdul Aziz and Abdul Hamid, had become more or less of a name, especially as Beyrut and the Biq'a, were not included under the agreement.

The Revolution of the Young Turks, and the Counter-Revolution which established them still more firmly in power, were at first received with delirious joy in Syria. Eye-witnesses have told me how Moslem sheikh and Christian priest, Druze and Maronite, Jew and Greek embraced each other in the streets. Each sect strove to outdo the other in a show of brotherly love and tolerance. There was an orgy of sentimentalism and highfalutin talk about the unity of the human race which would have deceived the onlooker into thinking that this was not the land in which race and faith hatred is more deeply implanted than in any other. But the dream was short. The Young Turks soon shed their lamb's fleeces, and people began to find out that there was no more liberty under the much-talked-of *hurriyet* of the Committee of Union and Progress than under Abdul Hamid. The army of spies was still employed, though by other masters. The sympathy for their reforms that promoters of the new régime looked to find in England was not forthcoming, and belief in the friendship of

that country was shaken. The only practical interest which England showed in the reformed Turkey was to insist on the appointment of the aged Kiamil Pasha as Prime Minister in Stamboul, though that veteran friend of Great Britain was weighed down with years and had no great sympathy with the new Turkey. By degrees those who were genuinely desirous for reform became discouraged and were ousted by fervent nationalists. The most sincere and hopeful friends of progress in Turkey lost heart, and their counsels were unheeded. There followed the Armenian massacres, and an outcry in England. The Young Turks disclaimed the massacres—which, indeed, were partly engineered by the political intrigues of the Armenians, who always hoped for European interference. But those who believed that reformed Turkey would keep its escutcheon free from such stains were effectually disillusioned.

Then came the war with Bulgaria, in which the British Press loudly and foolishly sided with the Bulgarians, turning what was purely a political struggle into a religious issue. "The Cross against the Crescent" was a typical newspaper heading of the day. Close upon Bulgaria's independence came the war between Turkey and Italy, against and during which no protest was raised by the Christian powers, especially England, although the war was entirely one of aggression on the part of Italy.

Hence the Great War opened with a Turkey entirely alienated from England, with no illusions as to France's disinterestedness in Syria, and bitterly antagonistic

to Italy. Germany was the Sick Man's only friend, and if the events of the war seemed to prove at first that Turkey had jumped on the wrong side of the fence, the events of the peace have been singularly kind to her. She alone, of all Germany's allies, has emerged from war and peace with a firmer position and enhanced prestige though territory has been forfeited. Her post-war enterprises on the whole have been successful, and there is more health in the Sick Man to-day than ever there was. Though she has lost some of her dominions, she has bargained for herself in so doing and has gained in kudos what she has lost in land.

At Turkey's entry into the war, the various Consuls of the Allies took their departure from Beyrut and other cities of the country. The French Consul in Beyrut, declaring that he would be back in a few weeks, had the indiscretion to leave his papers behind him, papers which incriminated many Syrians from the Turkish point of view. The Turks were saved much expense in their Intelligence Bureau when they confiscated these papers. Lists of proscribed sympathisers with the Allies were compiled with their help, and there were systematic hangings and imprisonments. A reign of terror obtained. Not a Syrian dared to lift a finger or raise a protest. To add to the sufferings of the people, starvation gradually stared them in the face. The supplies of grain were utilised by the Turks without much regard for the needs of the people. The miseries of starvation were increased by unpatriotic Syrians who bought up supplies of necessities ; and many a

fortune was founded by the purchase of land and houses at ridiculous rates from needy smallholders in this time of stress and want. The Lebanon in particular suffered. The barren mountain-sides produce but few cereals, and the Lebanese are dependent on outside sources for their bread. The silk industry was at a standstill, and other trades fatally injured. Eye-witnesses have described to me how the hungry crept into Beyrut to beg a few crusts and died daily in the streets, while their profiteering compatriots feasted and danced as gaily as if there were no war, entertaining the Turkish officers and civil officials and protesting their devotion to the Turkish cause. Many of the same people were equally ready to receive the Allies with acclamation a little later and to offer them similar entertainment and devotion.

We must return to the "grand jaloux" and what the less thoughtful amongst the French are pleased to consider the machinations of Great Britain in Syria. It is characteristic of the queer strain of ill-nature in French chauvinism that in all the many books written in French about Syria, the history of Syria, and the future of Syria, books in which France plays the part of the heroic lover, there is absolutely no mention of the American University of Beyrut. This, nevertheless, is one of the most vital and living forces in the country. The American missionary came into Syria armed with three weapons: a non-political purpose, a secular education in the vernacular, and the Bible. The first was hardly credible, the second gave him a

dangerous popularity and brought him into rivalry with the French priests, and the third actually threatened the faith. The education given by the good fathers at that time throughout Syria was as partial as such education often is. Its chief faults were the entire neglect of the Arabic language, the exaggeration of the importance of theological subjects and church history, and the neglect of the exact sciences. The Protestant missionaries, in their lower as well as their more advanced schools, taught Arabic and employed native teachers. They had an immense popular success, and awakened bitter antagonism in their rivals. "I'm off to —," said an American missionary to a friend, mentioning the name of a village in the Lebanon, "to open two schools." "Two?" queried his astonished friend. "Yes. We open a school there to-morrow, and the Jesuits will open another the next day."

The hunger for knowledge in the country was so keen that the missionaries felt the need of greater scope. The idea of a college run on thoroughly modern American lines was born, and its first President, the man who has become a legend throughout Syria for his wisdom, kindliness, tolerance and high-mindedness, Dr. Daniel Bliss, was sent to America and England to collect funds. The American Board for Foreign Missions established itself in the country in 1823; the Syrian Protestant College was founded in 1866. It was to be non-sectarian, and non-proselytising, to receive students from all creeds and to aim at providing them with a liberal education and an open mind. It began

with sixteen students, "housed for two years in four or five rooms of an insignificant building." From such small beginnings germinated the institution which, together with its sister institution of Robert College, has done more for the progress and enlightenment of the Near East than any movement, political, social, or religious, in those countries in modern times. From these colleges has come a steady stream of students educated in a sense which was never known before in the East ; not merely book-trained, but taught to think ; not only qualified for various professions, but given the ideals of conduct and character which manufacture men.

The Roman Catholic missionaries were stung into fresh activities. The immediate result of the founding of the American College, now known as the American University of Beyrut, was the establishment of a Jesuit University of Beyrut, to which was added in 1883 a faculty of medicine with the help of the French Government, "*pour travailler de concert à l'expansion du génie français.*" In imitation of the Americans the French had begun to open vernacular schools, and now they began to pin the motto "non-sectarian" to their banners. But in all French schools it was the policy to use the French language as much as possible. Education in the American College was at first entirely in Arabic, and for fifteen years it continued to be in that language. After that date it was found so difficult to translate technical text-books and exact terminology into Arabic, and so many non-Arabic speaking students applied for admission that English

became the language used in the higher studies, though Arabic was not neglected. With the coming of the French as mandatories into the country more attention was given to French, and most students end by becoming tri-lingual at least.

On the other hand, it is frankly the ambition of the French that the Syrians should become French-speaking to the point of neglecting their mother-language. It is a policy that they carried out with success in other colonies, their idea being that the French language was the gate to French culture and hence to admiration of the French genius. As Ristelhueber says, in his "Les Traditions Françaises au Liban" :

" Aussi la langue française était-elle déjà universellement répandue en Syrie dans tous les milieux. Elle y est devenue la langue de la société comme celle des affaires : *bien des Syriens la possèdent parfois mieux que leur propre idiome*. Mais ce n'est pas là le seul résultat qu'aient atteint les ouvriers de notre influence. En même temps que notre langue, c'est notre civilisation et notre génie qu'ils ont propagés sur cette terre syrienne. Ils ont fait lever une élite d'hommes qui sont nos fils intellectuels et dont beaucoup nous font honneur. De même qu'ils diffusaient nos idées, tous ces établissements contribuaient à répandre le bon renom de notre pays, à le faire aimer, en gravant dans les esprits, à côté de l'image de la France protectrice, celle de la France civilisatrice."

The Protestant missionaries were from the very first regarded, if not as actual political agents, as opposing forces to the Gallicising efforts of the French schools

as well as to Catholicism. They spread the English language—that was reprehensible. They spread Anglo-Saxon ideas—that was dangerous. English money had gone to help in the founding of the American College, Great Britain was the protector of the Protestants in the Near East—hence Great Britain was encouraging the Americans from purely political motives. It was the “grand jaloux” again. The American University, in short, had served British interests by turning the eyes of the Syrian away from the mirror in which France desired that he should see himself as an incipient Frenchman. It had actually pointed out to the Syrian that his natural language was Arabic. It had taken away prestige from French institutions, and that was unpardonable.

Mingled with the tragedy of the actual fighting during the Great War, that tragedy which in the sacrament of blood and tears united French *poilu* and English private and bereaved women in France to bereaved women in England, we find the comedy of high politics in the Near East. In the first wave of enthusiasm mutual suspicions were forgotten. It did not take long for them to revive, however discreetly concealed and camouflaged. Sometimes the comedy developed into actual farce, as in the case of our relations with the Sherif of Mecca. Great Britain was cajoled into rash promises which she could never keep, and peace found her hampered by engagements formed with two of her allies which were at total variance. Whichever way she turned, she became inevitably “perfidie Albion.”

Similarly, she was surprised at the intense opposition caused by the Balfour Declaration. It is worth while to look at both these problems through foreign eyes so that we may see ourselves as others see us, and recognise that at least we have been guilty of indiscretions and that it will take years to re-establish the belief in British good faith which was our asset in the Near East before the war. What we recognise quite frankly as blunders in policy, count in the eyes of the Arab throughout the Near East as bad faith. Equally are we suspect in the eyes of our late Ally in Syria. She has long stigmatised us as the "grand jaloux," and the events of the peace have unfortunately confirmed her in her belief in our perfidy and double dealing. We have not been too well served by people who have acted with the best of intentions and the cleanest of hands, because their enthusiasm has led them in wrong directions. And lastly, we have suffered from the intrusion of the crank into politics.

At the outbreak of war, Colonel T. E. Lawrence was a young archæologist who in the course of his work had become more Arab than the Arabs, and dreamed a dream. That dream was the establishment of a rejuvenated Arab civilisation, a pan-Arab revival which should hurl the unimaginative Turk from his seat and astonish the world. He played with the idea and nursed it, and finally became the man who pulled the strings in the Arab revolt against Turkey, with the Sherifian family as figureheads so that the war might fitly be termed a *jihad*. Lawrence was a success. He was persuasive. "What man isn't persuasive," said one

who knows the Arab well, "who comes to a tribal sheikh with gold in his pocket?" Lawrence's persuasion cost the British Government many millions. The diversion was of military use at the moment.

The small skirmishes by which Lawrence and his Bedouin troops kept the Turks busy at the rail-head of Medina, and in the Hejaz generally, had their utility, and the appeal to Islam was of undoubted value politically. But the trouble was that Lawrence was a crank. He and some of his colleagues of the Arab Bureau saw the situation from the narrow opening of the Bedouin tent-door. Exaggerated reports of the gallantry and capability of the Sherif's family reached England, and an entirely false estimate of their political value was arrived at.

The first result of this venture into world politics by amateurs who had gained the ear of a harassed Home Government was the treaty proposed by Hussein the Grand Sherif, which was adopted by the British authorities in January 1916, the ratification being further endorsed by a letter of Sir Arthur MacMahon dated March 10th, 1916.

"Par l'entremise du Lawrence," says a recent French writer, "entre le Grand Chérif et le Gouverneur de l'Egypte, un accord secret fut conclu. Hussein aurait la suzeraineté du fameux Royaume Arabe qui s'étendrait de l'Egypte jusqu'à la Cilicie et de la Méditerranée à la Perse."

What were the articles of this secret treaty? I have not seen it, but a Syrian author, Amin Rihani,

who gives the treaty in a recently-published book entitled "Kings of Arabia," tells me that King Hussein gave him access to his copy. It is useless to set down all the articles here, but these are the main points :

(1) Great Britain undertook the establishment and protection of an independent Arab kingdom, to include the Arabian Peninsula, the vilayets of Aleppo and Mosul and the greater part of Mesopotamia. The Colony of Aden was to be outside these boundaries.

(2) Great Britain was to provide the Arab Government with the materials of war during the war, and also with funds.

(3) The Vilayet of Basrah was to be temporarily under the domination of Great Britain.

On the adoption of this treaty, in February 1916, the Allies recognised Hussein as King of the Hejaz.

Secret or not, the French got wind of the agreement, and the immediate result was the Sykes-Picot Treaty, signed, I believe, before the conclusion of the arrangements with Hussein. By this treaty the French were guaranteed a free hand on the coast of Syria and in the Lebanon, and also advisory rights (similar to those now held by England in Iraq) in the interior of Syria. Further, Sir Edward Grey wrote to the French Ambassador in London that H.M. the King would accept the treaty for the general welfare, provided the Arabs would share in the war, and that to the Arabs should fall the four Syrian cities Homs, Hama, Aleppo and Damascus. How the Sherif was made contented with

this much-modified programme is as yet unrecorded ; but it was to be still more attenuated before the end of the long road was reached.

Meanwhile British gold poured unceasingly into the coffers of the Emirs Abdallah, Faisal, and Ali, sons of King Hussein, and into the open hands of their allies and mercenaries. They were prosperous times for any small sheikh who liked to cast in his lot with the Sherifians. There were no mere promises. Mercenaries were paid, subsidies given, bribes lavished, and a substantial amount contributed towards the keeping up of the state of the Sherifian princes—in hard gold. To the Bedouin, gold is the best argument in the world. Much capital was made of every small achievement on the part of the picturesque and heterogeneous horde which made up the Sherifian army. It was a mutual admiration society : Faisal aggrandised by Lawrence and Lawrence through Faisal ; a murmur of adulation to which England at home, hypnotised by the romance of the setting and the mystery which surrounded the figure of Lawrence, listened believingly and proudly. Tales of Lawrence's retiring nature, of his hatred of publicity, roused fresh enthusiasm. England loves a modest hero, and adores one who blushes.

Allenby's triumphal advance through Palestine was the glad event which really persuaded a war-weary world that the day was won and peace was in sight. The big offensive opened on September 19th, 1918, and was followed by the utter rout of the Turkish armies in Palestine. The Fourth Turkish Army, beaten back

*for the second time. The B.E.F. were the first
to enter the country and were hailed.*



Men of Bsharreh firing a salute in honour of the High Commissioner.



Arab horseman : Tripoli.

in the Lower Jordan Valley, retreated to Es Salt and Amman. When Amman fell, the Turks, completely demoralised, retired north in confusion, and lost thousands of men and many guns. The final blow to the Fourth Army, the *coup de grâce*, was administered by the Emir Faisal and his Arabs, who subsequently captured Deraa (September 17th). There followed the cavalry advance on Damascus, where Turks and Germans were already at loggerheads, and when Damascus was finally reached there was no resistance from the town whatsoever, the Turks having evacuated it. It was entered on October 1st, the stage being so set that it was the Emir Faisal who appeared in the rôle of deliverer, the Sherifian troops being hailed with enthusiasm by the Arab population, which had already been prepared by pan-Arab propaganda. In many ways the Emir was competent to play the part. He has personality and good looks ; someone has said of him that he " looks like the picture-Bible Christ with a dash of Charles Stuart." In ordinary evening dress or even in tennis kit he is a dignified figure, while in his native Arab dress he looks impressive. He has charming manners and a delightful smile. But a Druze sheikh to whom I was talking recently put his finger on what was perhaps the weak spot. " He listened with both ears," he said, meaning that he was swayed by varying counsels.

It was hardly Faisal's fault if he was unsatisfied with the dubious position in Syria in which he found himself on conclusion of the armistice on October 31st. Already the fair vision of a vast Arab empire promised

so glibly had dwindled away to next to nothing. In Mesopotamia the British were pushing up towards Mosul, and their talk of installing a Sherifian prince in Mesopotamia was indefinitely shelved. In Syria, while the British were in military occupation, his hopes of becoming nominal king of the country were kept alive, but with the advent of the French he knew that he would find opposition. The French, on the other hand, viewed our occupation of Syria with visible nervousness and our sponsorship of Faisal with anger. What of the dreams of a French colony which should embrace all Syria and Palestine, with Armenia and the Mosul Vilayet as well? At all events, Syria was their own particular love, wooed since the Crusades, with the sanction of the Uniat Churches to bless the union. Palmerston never viewed the presence of the French troops in the Lebanon with half the uneasiness that our Allies viewed our occupation of Syria. And if we found the promises we had made to the Sherifians awkward, the French regarded them as the rankest betrayal of themselves. We were further embarrassed by our promise to provide a national home for the Jews in Palestine. Already the harvest sown so lightly in days of stress was beginning to near its reaping.

The French reproach us with the precipitate suddenness of our eventual evacuation of Syria, which they see as intentional. In a recently published book about Syria, "*Le Chemin de Damas*," written by two authors of the name of Tharaud and dedicated to General Gouraud, there is a rancorous explosion about it:

“ Sous prétexte qu’ils devraient libérer au plus tôt leurs contingents nos Alliés insistèrent pour que la relève se fit tout de suite. Nous nous trouvâmes donc obligés de remplacer, tant bien que mal, leurs fortes garnisons par des postes misérables. Là où ils avaient une brigade, nous mettions un bataillon. Et le pire, c’est qu’en se retirant ils laissaient derrière eux (négligence ou calcul) des dépôts d’armes et de munitions, dont les gens de Fayçal s’empressaient de se saisir durant le court intervalle qui séparait le départ des Anglais et la venue de nos troupes. Aussi, tandis que nos Alliés, avec des forces considérables, avaient pu vivre paisiblement au milieu de gens desarmés, nous nous trouvâmes, en maints endroits, avec de faibles contingents, parmi des populations abondamment pourvues de fusils et de cartouches, et qu’excitait contre nous la propagande chérifienne. Enfin, l’armée anglaise avait fait, en s’en allant, de grands achats de bestiaux et de vivres ; une disette s’ensuivit : le bruit s’accrédita que nous amenions la misère avec nous, et que l’abondance n’existait que sous le régime britannique.”

Undoubtedly, it was in a somewhat impatient mood that the British did finally evacuate. “ Vous l’avez voulu, Georges Dandin ! ” was their attitude. The outcry of the French Press and publicists had been venomous, and ever since Lawrence’s unlucky adventures into politics they were inevitably suspicious of our intentions, whatever we did ; and not, it must be admitted, without some cause. Nevertheless, the contrast between the French and British occupations

was inevitable. Frenchmen in Syria have said to me with some bitterness, " We know we have failed in some directions, but we have had neither money nor men. The war has left us bankrupt of both. These people are always thinking to themselves, ' If the British had been here, Syria would have been prosperous.' "

But to return to Faisal. It was a foregone conclusion that a rupture was inevitable between the Sherifian prince and the French, and the false counsels showered upon the Emir, on top of the inflated ideas inculcated by Lawrence, precipitated the break. At the beginning of March 1920, Faisal had proclaimed himself king of Syria, including Palestine, regardless of inconvenient Balfour declarations. More than ever the authorities in London began to feel the embarrassment of the promises, authorised and unauthorised, made to the Arabs.

In July, General Gouraud, whose operations in Cilicia had been seriously hindered by the Emir's policy of obstruction, sent him an ultimatum, obliging him to accept the French mandate, to give the French a free hand and absolute power on the Biq'a railway, and to agree to other practical details of submission. Faisal gave a half-hearted agreement on the last day of the interval given for consideration, but took no steps to carry out the French commands. Finally, the French marched on Damascus, encountered the Sherifian troops in a rocky valley of the anti-Lebanon—some crosses by the wayside mark the spot to-day—and defeated them. At Damascus Faisal was given

forty-eight hours to clear out, and cleared out. It was his final exit from Syria.

Of the subsequent fortunes of the Sherifian dynasty I cannot write here. More trouble was to be reaped from that quarter before long. But the mistrust sown by this particular episode did not end with Faisal's expulsion. A band of Pan-Arabs was left behind with strong Nationalist proclivities, and this very band has taken active part against the French in the recent Druze rebellion. French public opinion is poisoned against Great Britain in this particular, and one has only to read such books as Benoit's popular novel " *La Chate-laine du Liban* " to see that in the fancy of the average Frenchman the hidden hand in every anti-French intrigue in Syria is British. In this book the villain of the piece is an English colonel acting as agent-provocateur in Beyrut, who, while posing as a jovial connoisseur of cocktails, spies on his hosts and successfully engineers a rising of Bedouins in the desert which wipes out a detachment of the French camel corps stationed at Palmyra. This character was at once recognised by people on the spot as being a caricature, of the grossest kind, of a British officer well known in Beyrut. So clearly was this officer indicated that General Gouraud wrote him a personal letter of apology. Of what importance is a mere indiscreet novel, a best-seller? it will be asked. It is a novel which embodies the creed of thousands of credulous Frenchmen, who accept it as being based on fact. It introduces actual names :

" 'Enfin, il y a miss Gertrude Bell, mis [*sic*] Bell

qui aura rivalisé avec le colonel Lawrence, pour nous faire tout le mal que vous savez, car, je le présume, dans vos luttes contre les nomades, dans les embûches que vous avez eu à surmonter chaque jour, vous avez, plus d'une fois, rencontré la main anglaise.' Je lui montrai mon bras. 'La balle qui m'a blessé était de provenance anglaise, mon colonel.' "

I have already referred to the book entitled "Le Chemin de Damas" by the brothers Tharaud, in which very categorical accusations are made against us. Childish as are these suspicions, they are the logical outcome of a series of mistakes and vacillations in the past, and can only be put at rest by mutual frankness and good will. The attitude of the British in Palestine during the recent Druze rebellion has been the best refutation possible to arguments still brought forward to show that our sympathies are with the Nationalists, and the authorities in Syria have sense enough to realise that we, like themselves, have nothing to gain from continued disorder in the Near East.

I was present in Syria during the earlier period of the rising and heard many opinions and theories as to the causes which brought it about. The Christians of the Lebanon, even those who had been most devoted to France were, to my surprise, little more than lukewarm in their partisanship. The Syrians are a nation of merchants, and business has suffered severely from the depreciation of the Syrian pound along with the French franc. Syrians compare their stagnant trade with the flourishing affairs of their neighbours in Palestine and are envious. Rumours are always flying about

that the French "cannot afford to keep the country, and that Great Britain will be asked to take over the Mandate," and absurd as the report is, I was asked by more than one Syrian of the intelligent classes whether there was truth in it. Incidentally, it reaches the ears of the French and acts as one more irritant in their minds against us. "The wish is father to the thought" is their conclusion, and again the subtle propaganda of Great Britain is blamed—a propaganda which only exists in the imagination of French officials.

Of the transactions with the Druzes which, whether mishandled or not, are among the more immediate causes of the rising, so much has been written in the newspapers that it would be superfluous to discuss them here ; neither am I qualified to do so, all information that I have being hearsay and secondhand. But that the Druzes were promised support from their compatriots of other faiths, which was not after all forthcoming, seems certain ; and it is also clear that the reasons for these half-hearted promises were the general discontent about the financial situation ; the wish that Syria should have some such form of self-government as her neighbour Iraq ; the recruitment of French officials among men whose only experience has been gained in French colonies, such as Senegal, and also the general misunderstanding and blundering resultant upon the almost exclusive use of the French language in Government offices, in the courts of justice, and elsewhere. Here let me remark that, coming from

Iraq, a country where knowledge of Arabic is considered essential for British officials, where the language of the law-courts is Arabic, and where all intelligence officers are expected to speak and write fluently, I was surprised at the rarity of Arabic-speaking French officials in Syria. I was assured that some did exist, nevertheless it was freely admitted that they were very few. Even among the méharistes, who are supposed to act as intelligence officers, there was only one officer whose Arabic was even passable. "How do you manage?" I asked in blank surprise. "We take interpreters with us," was the reply. In most cases, it seems the interpreters are town-bred Christians, and a town-bred Christian is the last third person for a tribal sheikh to admit to any confidence he wishes to make to a Government official. When one adds to this that the interpreters often deliberately misinterpret, exaggerate, or act in ways to enhance their importance or prestige, it seems that here, in any case, is a fairly fruitful field of trouble. I was talking this over one day with a French official who said to me, "We haven't the men. So many of our Arabic-speaking officers were killed in the war; we have not the reserves which you have in Egypt and the Sudan." "But," I objected, "the war has been over a long time now. Surely there has been opportunity for training and equipping officials for colonial and mandatory jobs." He said, "We French have no facility for languages." Later, I discovered that, though he had been for more than six years in the country, he had acquired no Arabic at all.

Forcing the native to learn French instead of learning the language of the native is, of course, a policy which is deliberate, but it has disadvantages. Not only does it result in misunderstanding and in misinformation, as I have said ; but it does not conduce to sympathy between the governing and the governed. It must, inevitably, lead to tactlessness ; and here, from what I have heard on all sides, the French have been to blame. Conduct on the part of officials that would not be tolerated for an instant in the case of a British official in Egypt or Iraq or Palestine, passes unnoticed. An English officer told me that while he was seeing a French official one day about a matter of business, a local notable was announced, and, as sometimes happens, followed hard upon the heels of the man who brought in his card. The Frenchman said peevishly, " Tell him I can't see him," and turning to his English visitor exclaimed, " These pigs will push in when I'm busy." The " cochon " referred to at that moment stood at the door, within hearing, and well understood French, the language in which the impatient complaint was made. This is one instance of many where care and tact would have saved the making of an enemy. Such insults are stored up in the hearts of the people and eventually bear sour fruit. Not for a moment would the officer in question have been guilty of an act of injustice or deliberate default in his official duties, but thoughtlessness and lack of imagination are, from our point of view, inexcusable shortcomings in a political officer.

There are, of course, and it would be strange if it

were not so, notable exceptions : men whose character and wisdom have endeared them to those with whom they have been in contact. There are men like Monsieur de Lorey, director of the Institut Français at Damascus, an enthusiast for Arab traditions and Arab art, who are labouring to revive half-forgotten industries and to re-animate ancient arts. There are men whose patient devotion to duty in outposts has won them the respect of those with whom they have lived. France is poor ; she cannot afford to give her officials or soldiers the half or the quarter of the pay which Britishers receive in similar jobs. Life is dear in Syria, and there are none of the amenities of social life which we should think make life on foreign service worth while. There is no dancing floor of any size in Beyrut, for instance, and most officers are far too poor to indulge in such amusements as polo or racing. The result is that they fall back on the casino or less reputable pleasures, and French prestige in the long run is not enhanced thereby.

To return to the Druzes, that hitherto unconquered, proud, and bigoted nation within a nation. Their religion is no longer entirely a secret, and in various books what is known of their queer, half-heathen, half-mystical faith may be read by the curious, in spite of Druze precautions that no infidel shall be admitted into the arcana of their beliefs. But it constitutes a bond which holds them together more strongly than the tie of kinship, more indissolubly than vows of fidelity. For some eight centuries it has welded them together so



Photo by]

'Azem Palace, Damascus. The Courtyard.

[French Institute.



The 'Azem Palace after the fire of October 20th, 1925 (Druze rebellion).

that when they act they act as one man. Tell them now that their faith is known and they will reply that their inmost secret is guarded and is more difficult for outsiders to discover than "a black ant perambulating a piece of black marble on a black night."

Their books and traditions are, it seems, full of prophecies and signs of the times. Their long series of reincarnations and rebirths must at some time, if they strive to act worthily, end with a rebirth in China, in which country, they imagine, the nation of Druzes, purified and perfect, will re-assemble before they proceed to the conquest of the world, when a shining army of true believers, with the deified Caliph Hakim Biamrillah at their head, will sweep towards Europe in triumph, no army of unbelievers being able to withstand the irresistible advance. The signs of this millenium are noted, and are eagerly looked for. In the opinion of many of the initiated, prophecy is already fulfilling—nay, *has* fulfilled itself, and the great day is at hand. What are the signs? The taking of Jerusalem by Christians (already fulfilled), the ending of a great war among the infidels (fulfilled), and lastly the fall of Mecca. In the prophecy it is the Christians who besiege Mecca, with an Abyssinian named John at their head, and although the recent taking of Mecca by the Wahabis cannot be said to be the fall predicted, yet there are those who are ready to interpret the prophecy loosely and to admit the present situation in the Hejaz to be the prophesied event. What wonder, then, if the eyes of their wise men are turned eagerly

towards China, that they read with hope accounts of warlike movements and upheavals in China, and that they fight desperately and without fear in the certain belief that, though they may be killed, they will only speed to China, where they will incarnate in the bodies of warriors destined to return to the Jebel Druze and to bring the final triumph with them. Hence their fearless courage and their obstinate resistance.

I have endeavoured to trace the long connection between Syria and France, and it is in the sincere hope that in the near future, when the country has quieted down again and the Druzes have once more deferred their illusive hopes, they may return to a quiet and prosperous enjoyment of their responsibilities and privileges. The recent trouble, indeed, may be the turning at the end of a long, dark and tiresome lane. It is certain that France will in some way remodel her policy in Syria on the restoration of order, and on some such welcome conclusion of her troubles, she will have no more sincere well-wisher than Great Britain. It is so obviously better that there should be the much-needed peace in the Near East, in order that each country may at last have opportunity to develop after the war that there can be no question of bad faith on either side. The almost childish suspicions that have troubled past relations may surely be put away with childish things, and relegated to the dustbin. Syria under the French mandate, once the country has recovered from the present check, may have a time of

prosperity and quiet before her, which she sorely needs ; and if such a time is inaugurated by the coming peace, it will be welcomed by all her neighbours with pleasure and good will.

THE END

INDEX

A

ABDUL AZIZ, Sultan, 261
 Abdul Hamid, Sultan, 261
 Acre *vide* Akka
 Adonis, Myth of, 27 *et seq.*, 40, 223
 " River, 29, 32, 126, 129, 190
 " Gorge of the, 40
 " See also Afqa
 Afforestation, 58, 59, 232
 Afqa, route to, 32 *et seq.*
 " Cavern, 40, 42 *et seq.*, 73, 119
 " Sacred grove of, 59
 Ahmed al Bedawi Mosque, 185, 195
 Ain Ajuz, 204
 Ain al Jurn, 38
 Ain Markus, 126
 Ain Zahalta, 49, 55, 73
 Akka, 102, 190, 193 (note), 255, 257
 Al Arz, 57, 59
 Al Ghunseh, 181
 Al Jiyeh, 110
 Aleih, 48, 51
 Alexius, Emperor, 189
 Al Khidhr, 222
 Allath, 21
 Allenby, Lord, 115, 118, 272
 Al Maideh, 38
 Al Mina, 178
 Alouites, 59, 196, 218
 Amatura, 170
 American Board for Foreign Missions,
 275
 American University in Beirut, 240,
 245 *et seq.*, 264 *et seq.*
 Amin Rihani, 270
Amiun, 132, 167, *et seq.*
 Amshit, 129
 Anna Comnena, 190
 Antioch, 114, 115, 189, 191
 Antilyas, 239
 Antura, 33, 75
 Apiculture, 232
 Aqqar plain, 195
 Arab Kingdom, 270 *et seq.*
 Arches, Castle of, 191
 Armenians, 117, 119, 235 *et seq.*, 262

Arsus, 21
 Ashqut, 230
 Assyrian stelae, etc., 114, 118, 119,
 143
 Astarte, temples, 30, 32, 126
 " ruins at Afqa, 43
 " priests of, 115
 " cult of, 126
 Athenæus, 50, 223
 Atshit, 157 *et seq.*
 " idol of, 158
 Aurelian, Emperor, 15
 Aurelius, the Emperor Marcus, 118
 Ayash, Sheikh, 196
 'Azem ('Azhem) Palace viii., 106
 Azimus, 21

B

BAAL-FIRES, 125
 Baalbec, 22, 49, 76
 Bacchus, 34
 Baldwin, 191
 Balfour Declaration, 269
 Banias, 59
 Baptism of Christ, 145
 Baptism of Christ, mural paintings
 of, 145, 169
 Baptism, Greek Orthodox, 227
 Baruk, 57, 73, 98
 Baskinta, 73
 Batasi, 183
 Batrun, 129, 131
 Bdiman, 153, 170
 Bell, Miss Gertrude Lowthian, 277
 Bells, introduced by Crusaders, 193
 Benat Yakub, 59
 Benoit, P., 277
 Berthold, 255
 Beshir, Druze Sheikh, 102
 Beshir, the Emir, 101, *et seq.* 129,
 256
 Beteddin (Beyt ed Din, Bteddin),
 73, 101, 105, 106
 Beybars, Sultan, 202

Beyrut, 115, 117, 191, 260 *et seq.*
See also American and Jesuit
 Universities of

Beyt Miri, 55
 Beyt Shehab, 34, 72
 Bhamdun, 55
 Bikfaya, 34, 72
 Bkerkeh, 23, 121
 Bliss, Dr. Daniel, 247, 265
 Bliss, Dr. F. J., 103, 223, 253
 Bliss, Dr. Howard, 246
 Bludan, 118
 Borja, 125
 Botrys *vide* Batrun
 Boyir, 126
 Brossé, Monsieur L., vii., 43, 127,
 132, 134, 142, 144, 158, 206
 Brummana, 49, 51, 55, 72
 Bsharreh, 62, 140, 157, 171
 Bshmuni, 152
 Bulgaria, 262
 Buqaya, plain of the, 197
 Bureau de Tourisme, 56
 Burj Emmouey, 126
 Burj es Seba, 183
 Burkhardt, 68, 94, 102, 131, 183, 199,
 203, 206
 Byblos *vide* Jubeil
 Bzebdin, 96
 Bzoummar, 34

C

CAFARACA *vide* Kafar Akka
 Camel-corps at Palmyra, *vide* Méharistes
 Capitulations, 256
 Carmelites, 255
 Carpet-weaving, 241 *et seq.*
 Cedars, 40, 57, 62 *et seq.*
 Cedars of Ain Zahalta, 57
 Cedars of Baruk, 57, 98
 Chastel Blanc, 191, 197
 Chastel de Moinestre, 191
 Chastel Rouge *vide* Qal'at Yammur
 China and the Druzes, 273, 284
 Churchill, 102
 Clothing for visitors, 56
 Coffee-houses, 97-99
 Committee of Union and Progress,
 261
 Convent of Sergius and Bacchus, 34
 Cross, Feast of the, 125, 128
 Crusaders, 115, 116, 128, 132, 136,
 170, 189, 193, 252

D

DALE, MARY BLISS, 248
 Damur, 110
 Dances, 205, 224, 225, 229
 Daphne, Valley of, 116
 Debka *vide* Dances
 De Chasteuil, 148
 De Lorey, M. Eustache de, viii., ix.,
 282
 Deir es Salib, 153 *et seq.*
 Dhuhr ash Shuweir, 34, 73
 Djemal (Jemal) Pasha, 246
 Djeddar (Jezzar) Pasha, 102
 Dodge, Rev. B., 247
 Dog River, 34, 115, 118, 120, 143,
 190
 Dominicans, 255
 Dowriyah spring, 203
 Druzes, 23, 47, 76, 91, 92, 97, 98,
 111, 192, 217, 258 *et seq.*

E

EDESSA, 191
 Egyptian stelae, 114
 Egyptians, 49, 128
 El Metein, 95, 96
 Enfeh, 133, 191
 Ephca, 21 (note)
 Er Aar, 72
 Evil Eye, 195, 221

F

Faisal, Emir, 272 *et seq.*
 Fakhreddin, Emir, 102
 Feast of the Cross, 125
 Feytrun, 37, 38
 Feudalism, 192
 Fidar River, 127
 Fish, Sacred, 186
 Fishermen, 112, 135
 Francis I, 256
 Franciscans, 255, 256
 French administration, influence, etc.,
 68, 210, 252, 279 *et seq.*
 Fuad Pasha, 260
 Funerals, 227

G

GARLANDS, use of in Greek marriage
 rite, etc., 223
 Ghazir, 29, 130, 241

Ghineh, 29, 121
 Ghosta, 121
 Gibbon, 188
 Gouraud, General, 115, 119, 274,
 275, 276

H

HADET, 62, 170
 Hadrian, 58
 Hakim Biamrillah, 283
 Hamah, 203
 Hammana, 96, 97
 Hammam Meskutin (Algeria), 37
 Hardy, Thomas, 218
 Harf es Salib, 143
 Harun er Rashid, 102
 Hasrun, 171
 Henry IV, 256
 Hermits, 60, 61, 66, 139, 149 *et seq.*
 Hermon, Mount, 48, 59
 Hiram, King, 31, 57, 110, 128
 Homs, 185, 195
 Hospitality, 41, 92, 96, 203, 205
 Hospitaliers, 202
 Hotels, 49 *et seq.*
 Huat el Haj Faris, 151

I

IBN BATUTA, 182
 'Id es Salib *vide* Feast of the Cross
 Insane, Treatment of, 166, 209
 'Iraq, 279, 281
 Iron Spring, 39
 Isis, temple of, at Jubeil, 128
 Ismailiyehs, 219

J

JEBEL AL HABU, 203
 Jebel Feytrun, 37
 Jedeidah, 29
 Jerusalem, 190
 Jesuits, 140, 167
 Jesuit University of Beyrut, 266
 Jinns, 38, 156, 219
 Jordan, 191
 Jubeil, 32, 121, 127, 191, 192
 Julian, Emperor, 115
 Juneih, Bay of, 29, 120, 121
 Justinian, the Emperor, 85

K

KAFAR AKKA, 191
 Kalamos *vide* Kalamun
 Kalamun, 135, 162
 Kalawun, Emir, 182
 Kaniseh, Mount, 48, 72, 74, 92
 Kasr el Arus, 20
 Kfur, 29
 Khalwehs, 77, 98
 Khan al Beg, 196
 Khatuniyeh Mosque, 181
 Khazen family, 45, 192
 Kiamil, Pasha, 262
 King Solomon's lilies, 31
 Krak des Chevaliers *vide* Qa'at al
 Husn
 Kubb Elias (Cilicia), 59
 Kunshara, 73, 82
 Kura, 168

L

LAMARTINE, 69
 Latakia, 116, 190, 191
 Lawrence, Colonel T. E., 269 *et seq.*
 Lazarists, 33, 140
 Lebanon as summer resort, 47 *et seq.*
 Pre-war government of, 260, 261
 Greater, 252
 Louis IX, 251, 254
 Louis XIII, 256
 Louis XIV, 256

M

MAAMILTEIN, 124
 Macmahon, Sir A., 270
 Madrassat al Husseiniyeh, 181
 Malak-Bel, 21
 Malikal Dahir, Sultan, 181' 182
 Mamelukes, 202
 Mar Antonius Qozhayya, 165
 Mar Elias, 73, 78 *et seq.*, 122, 195, 222
 Mar Jirius, cave of, 122-4, in Qadisha,
 154
 Fair at, 198, 204 *et seq.*
 Monastery of, 84, 202 *et seq.*
 Mar Lisha, 148, 149
 Mar Mama, 147, 152
 Mar Merun *vide* Marun
 Mar Nura, 169
 Mar Saba, 141
 Mar Sarkis (Sergius), 147, 148
 Mar Shimun, 152
 Mar Sophia, 126

Mar Takla, spring of, 73 (*see* St. Thecla)
 Mar Yuhanna, 73, 82, 159, 168
 Markab, Castle of, 191
 Maronites, 67, 68, 121, 139, 160, 251 *et seq.*
 Marriage, ceremonies *vide* Wedding
 Marun, Mar Yuhanna, 253
 Marun, Saint *vide* Maronites
 Massacres of 1860, 259
 Maundrell, quotations from, 69, 81, 120, 124, 126, 164 (note), 177, 183
 Méharistes (camel corps), 16 *et seq.*
 Metawileh, the, 40, 46, 162, 218
 Mount Glainen, 191
 Mont Pélérin, 192
 Mugharat al Asfuriyah, 126
 Mugharat al Jaita, 119
 Mule-travel, 36, 38, 63
 Mural paintings, 144 *et seq.*
 Muruj, 55, 72 *et seq.*, 95
 Musayqa, 75, 78
 Music, 229

N

NAHR abu Ali, 178
 Nahr al Kelb *vide* Dog River
 Nahr Ibrahim *vide* Adonis River
 Napoleon III, 118, 259
 Napoleon Buonaparte, 102, 256, 257
 Nasreddin Khodja, 102
 Near East Relief, 56, 122, 235 *et seq.*
 Neba al Hadid, 39
 Neba al Lissa, 40
 Neba Mar Takla, 73
 Nefin v. Enfeh
 Nimrud, 102
 Nosereiyeh *vide* Alouites
 Noyes, Alfred, 172

O

OLIVES, 231
 Orphanages of N.E.R., Antilyas, 239, Sidon, 242, Ghazir, 241
 Overland transport, 54, 55

P

PADUA, 185
 Palmyra, 15 *et seq.*, 40
 Peter the Hermit, 189
 Phoenician tombs, cuttings, etc., 127, 131, 133, 134, 168

Pigeon Rocks, 108
 Place of Battles, 170
 Porphyryion, site of, 110
 Posidonius, 50
 Potsherds, votive, 118
 Pottery, 99
 Prehistoric cave and workshop, 126
 Printing-press, old, 83
 Prisons, 176
 Poulains, 193

Q

QADISHA VALLEY, 55, 57, 64, 138 *et seq.*, 169
 Qal'at al Bahr, 112
 Qal'at al Husn, 191, 194 *et seq.*
 Qal'at al Markab, 116, 191
 Qal'at al Mezzeh, 112
 Qal'at al Yammur, 191
 Qaleiat, 191, 195
 Qannubin, 136, 159 *et seq.*
 Qaqr, 73, 86 *et seq.*
 Qasa, 143
 Qommat as Sauda, 62
 Qozhayya, 165 *et seq.*
 Qurtai Beg, 182
 Qurtowiya Mosque, 182

R

RAIFUN, 33, 34, 35, 55, 121, 231
 Ras Jedia, 110
 Ras er Rasif, 124
 Ras Shekka, 123
 Raymond of Toulouse, 191
 Renan, Ernest, 31, 69, 129, 241
 Ristelhueber, 267
 Roederer, Paul, 257
 Rostand, 172
 Rudel, Jaufré, 172 *et seq.*

S

SABUR, Chapel of San, 132
 Saffita, 194
 Saidat ad Darr, 144, 169
 Saidat al Abzaz, 117
 St. Anthony, 143, 165, 185
 St. Barbara (St. Barbe), 155, 169
 St. Celamone, 145
 St. Francis of Assisi, 255
 St. George *vide* Mar. Jirius
 St. Gilles, 175 (note)
 St. Helena, 124, 125
 St. John, church of, in Beyrut, 192

St. John the Beloved, Amiun (Mar Yuhanna al Habib) *vide* Mar Yuhanna
 St. Louis, 193 (note)
 St. Louis, Castle of, 112
 St. Marina, 135, 162 *et seq.*
 St. Marun *vide* Maronites
 St. Michael, church of, 117
 St. Sergius and Bacchus, 34
 St. Thecla, 74
 Sanjil, 175
 Sannin, Mount, 27, 37, 48, 72, 73, 74
 Schools, 140
 Sharakhfita, 159
 Shehab family, 104, 105, 192
 Shekka, 62, 167
 Sherif of Mecca, 268 *et seq.*
 Shtora, 231
 Shuweir, 49, 51, 55, 71 *et seq.*
 Sidon, 108 *et seq.*, 242
 Silk Industry, 85 *et seq.*, 109, 232
 Sitt el Harisa, 121
 Sitt Mariam, 117
 Smith, Sir Sidney, 102
 Sofar, 48, 51
 Solomon and Cedars, 58, 64, 128
 Songs, 229
 Sorcery, 157
 Stanhope, Lady Hester, 102
 Suleyman I, 176
 Sun, Temple of the, at Palmyra, 22, 24, 76
 Superstitions (folk-lore, miracles, etc.). 28, 38, 46, 55, 59, 66, 73, 81, 88, 116, 117, 119, 121, 125, 139, 143, 156, 157, 159, 161, 165, 186, 195, 203, 206 *et seq.*, 218-222, 226, 227
 Suq al Gharb, 51, 55
 Sueqa, 183
 Sykes-Picot Agreement, 271
 Syrians, in hotels, 49-50, general characteristics, dress, etc., 213 *et seq.*
 Syrian Protestant College *vide* American University

T

TADMOR, Sheikh, 181
 Tadmor (*see* Palmyra)
 Tailan, Mosque of, 179
 Takla *vide* St. Thecla
 Tartus *vide* Tortosa
 Tell Qal'a, 197

Tell Qal'a, Sheikh of, 205, 210
 Terza, 163
 Tharaud, J. and J., 173, 274, 278
 Three Brothers, Tomb of, 21
 Thuja Tree, 43, 151
 Tortosa, Fort, and Our Lady of, 116, 191, 192
 Toulouse, Counts of, 199
 Trees, cult of, 46, 59 *et seq.*, 117
 Tripoli, 62, 171 *et seq.*
 Tshimli *vide* Bshmuni
 Tyre, 109

U

UMM Shakakif, 118

V

VENUS *vide* Astarte
 Venus, Bath of, 134

W

WADI el Atara, 39
 Wadi el Kabir, 159
 Wadi an Nasara, 203
 Wadi Brissa, 143
 Wasms, 19
 Water, virtues of, 88, 100
 Wedding, Greek Orthodox, 224 *et seq.*
 White Star *vide* Near East Relief
 William of Tyre, 129
 Winds, Our Lady of, 135
 Wines, 231
 Women, offerings to Astarte, 46, fashions, 49, 213, 217 (*see also* Superstitions)
 Woolley, Mr. Leonard, 248

Y

YAMMUNAH Lake, 44
 Yaribol, 21
 Young Turks, 261
 Yunis, Sheikh, 177 (note)

Z

ZAHLEH, 73 *et seq.*
 Zenobia, 25
 Zera-un, 73, 91
 Zozimus, 44
 Zuq Mikhail, 33

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